Infection Control in the Workplace

Infection control in the workplace aims to prevent pathogens from being passed from one person to another. The foundation of good infection control is to assume that everyone is potentially infectious.

Monitor Your Health and Stay Home When Needed

Be alert for symptoms. Watch for fever, cough, shortness of breath, or other symptoms of COVID-19. If employees have or think they have symptoms or have tested positive for COVID-19, require them to stay home in accordance with CDC guidelines.

Influenza (flu) and COVID-19 are both contagious respiratory illnesses, but different viruses cause them. Many health officials expect influenza and cold cases to increase this fall and winter as COVID-19 safety protocols are eased, and people start to mix more in work and social settings. Experts note many symptoms of the flu and COVID-19 are similar, including fever and body aches. However, breathing difficulty is more common with COVID-19. Health officials say that you should isolate, hydrate, and get tested if you are not feeling well.

Typical Onset of Symptoms

- **Flu:** A person experiences symptoms anywhere from 1 to 4 days after infection.
- **COVID-19:** A person experiences symptoms about five days after being infected, but symptoms can appear 2 to 14 days after infection.

Both COVID-19 and flu can have varying degrees of signs and symptoms, ranging from no symptoms (asymptomatic) to severe symptoms. The table on the next page outlines symptoms for both infections.

According to CDC guidelines, *regardless of vaccination status,* **if symptoms are present, testing is needed to tell if COVID-19 and/or flu is the illness causing symptoms and to confirm a diagnosis.** People can be infected with and have symptoms of both the flu and the virus that causes COVID-19 at the same time.

Symptoms	COVID-19	Flu
Fever or chills	✓	✓
Cough	✓	✓
Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing	✓	✗
Fatigue	✓	✓
Muscle or body aches	✓	✓
Headache	✓	✓
New loss of taste or smell	✓	✗
Sore throat	✓	✓
Congestion or runny nose	✓	✓
Nausea or vomiting	✓	✓
Diarrhea/vomiting	✓	Some people may have vomiting and diarrhea, though these symptoms are more common in children than adults.

This list does not include all possible symptoms. The CDC will continue to update this list as more is learned about COVID-19 and its variants.

Ways to Help Control Risk

Avoid Sharing Objects and Equipment

Avoid using other employees' phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment, when possible. If you cannot avoid using someone else's workstation, clean and disinfect before and after use.

Clean and Disinfect Frequently Touched Surfaces and Objects

Always follow standard practices and appropriate regulations specific to your type of facility for minimum standards for cleaning and disinfection. This guidance is indicated for buildings in community settings. It is not intended for health care settings or other facilities where specific regulations or practices for cleaning and disinfection may apply.

Clean and Disinfect Infected Spaces

If there has been a sick person or someone who **tested positive for COVID-19** in your facility within the last 24 hours, you should clean *AND* disinfect the space. Cleaning with products containing soap or detergent reduces germs on surfaces and objects by removing contaminants and may also weaken or damage some of the virus particles. Cleaning high-touch surfaces and shared objects once a day is usually adequate *unless* someone with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 has been in your facility or when certain conditions apply such as high transmission of COVID-19 or low vaccination rates in your community; or space is occupied by people at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

Safely Disinfect When Needed

Disinfecting (using U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)'s List) kills any remaining germs on surfaces, which further reduces any risk of spreading infection. If your disinfectant product label does not specify that it can be used for both cleaning and disinfection, clean visibly dirty surfaces with soap or detergent before disinfection. Use a disinfectant product from the EPA List that is effective against COVID-19. For additional information, review the Six Steps for Safe & Effective Disinfectant Use.

While Cleaning and Disinfecting

Open doors and windows and use fans or HVAC (heating, ventilation, and air conditioning) settings to increase air circulation in the area. Ensure safe and correct use and storage of cleaning and disinfectant products.

VACUUM THE SPACE IF NEEDED

Do not vacuum a room or area that has people in it. Use a vacuum equipped with high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter and bags, if available. While vacuuming, temporarily turn off in-room, window-mounted, or on-wall recirculation heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems to avoid contamination of HVAC units.

Ventilation

Ventilation system upgrades or improvements can increase the delivery of clean air and dilute potential contaminants. Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and provide acceptable indoor air. Ensure air filters are appropriately sized and within their recommended service life quality for the current occupancy level for each space. Rebalance or adjust HVAC systems to increase total airflow. In buildings where the HVAC fan operation can be controlled at the thermostat, set the fan to the "on" position instead of "auto," which will operate the fan continuously.

Note: Guidance is indicated for cleaning and disinfecting buildings in community settings to reduce the risk of COVID-19 spreading. This guidance is not intended for health care settings or for operators of facilities such as food and agricultural production or processing workplace settings, manufacturing workplace settings, or food preparation and food service areas where specific regulations or practices for cleaning and disinfection may apply.

Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility | CDC

Similarities and Differences between Flu and COVID-19 | CDC

Interim Public Health Recommendations for Fully Vaccinated People | CDC