

Reducing Workers' Risk of Exposure to COVID-19

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has developed a planning guidance based on traditional infection prevention and industrial hygiene practices. It focuses on the need for employers to implement engineering, administrative, and work practice controls and personal protective equipment (PPE), as well as considerations for doing so. This guidance is based on anticipated hazards and risks, and incorporates standard, contact, and airborne precautions, and use of face/eye protection.

To help employers determine appropriate precautions, OSHA has divided job tasks into four risk exposure levels: low risk, medium, high, and very high.

Low Exposure Risk

Jobs that do not require contact with people known to be, or suspected of being, infected with COVID-19 nor frequent close contact with (within 6 feet) of the general public. **In schools, positions such as Administration, Maintenance, Custodial and Groundskeeping generally should be considered low exposure risk.** Workers in this category *usually* have minimal occupational contact with the public and other coworkers. For workers who do not have frequent, close (within 6 feet) contact with the general public implement control measures described below:

Engineering Controls

- ▶ Additional engineering controls, such as physical barriers are not recommended for workers in the lower exposure risk group. Employers should ensure that engineering controls, if any, used to protect workers from other job hazards continue to function as intended.

Administrative Controls

- ▶ Monitor public health communications about COVID-19 recommendations and ensure that workers have access to that information. Frequently check the [CDC COVID-19 website](#) and/or [Poms website](#).
- ▶ Collaborate with workers to designate effective means of communicating important COVID-19 information.

Personal Protective Equipment

- ▶ Additional PPE is not recommended for workers in the lower exposure risk group. Workers should continue to use the PPE, if any, that they would ordinarily use for other job tasks.

Medium Exposure Risk

Jobs that require frequent (i.e., more than a few minutes) and/or close (i.e., within 6 feet) contact with the general public or co-workers (e.g., schools, high-population-density work environments, some high-volume retail settings). **In schools, positions in Student Nutrition Services who are preparing and distributing meals, Transportation drivers delivering or distributing meals and any staff who is in frequent and/or close contact with the public or co-workers should be considered medium exposure risk.** In workplaces where workers have medium exposure risk, implement control measures described below.

Engineering Controls

- ▶ Install physical barriers, such as clear plastic sneeze guards, distribution points with 6-foot distancing, etc. where feasible.

Administrative Controls

- ▶ Where appropriate, limit the public's access to the worksite, or restrict access to only certain workplace areas for example distribution of educational materials should be on a limited or by appointment only.
- ▶ Consider strategies to minimize face-to-face contact (e.g., phone-based communication, telework).

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

When selecting PPE, consider factors such as function, fit, decontamination ability, disposal, and cost. Sometimes, when PPE will have to be used repeatedly for a long period of time, a more expensive and durable type of PPE may be less expensive overall than disposable PPE. Each employer should select the combination of PPE that protects workers specific to their workplace. Workers with medium exposure risk may need to wear some combination of gloves, a gown, a face mask, and/or a face shield or goggles. PPE ensembles for workers in the medium exposure risk category will vary by work task, the results of the employer's hazard assessment, and the types of exposures workers have on the job.

Should cloth face coverings be washed or otherwise cleaned regularly? How regularly?

Yes. They should be routinely washed depending on the frequency of use.

How does one safely sterilize/clean a cloth face covering?

A washing machine should suffice in properly washing a face covering.

How does one safely remove a used cloth face covering?

Individuals should be careful not to touch their eyes, nose, and mouth when removing their face covering and wash hands immediately after removing.

High Exposure Risk

Jobs with high potential for exposure to known or suspected sources of COVID-19. Workers in this category include: Healthcare delivery and support, medical transport workers and mortuary workers. **Schools do not typically have staff with this exposure risk.**

Very High Exposure Risk

Jobs with high potential for exposure to known or suspected sources of COVID-19 during specific medical, postmortem, or laboratory procedures. Workers in this category include: Healthcare workers (e.g., doctors, nurses, emergency medical technicians) performing aerosol-generating procedures (e.g., intubation, cough induction procedures or invasive specimen collection) on known or suspected COVID-19 patients. Healthcare or laboratory personnel collecting or handling specimens from known or suspected COVID-19 patients (e.g., manipulating cultures from known or suspected COVID-19 patients). Morgue workers performing autopsies, which generally involve aerosol-generating procedures, on the bodies of people who are known to have, or suspected of having, COVID-19 at the time of their death. **Schools do not have staff with this exposure risk.**