

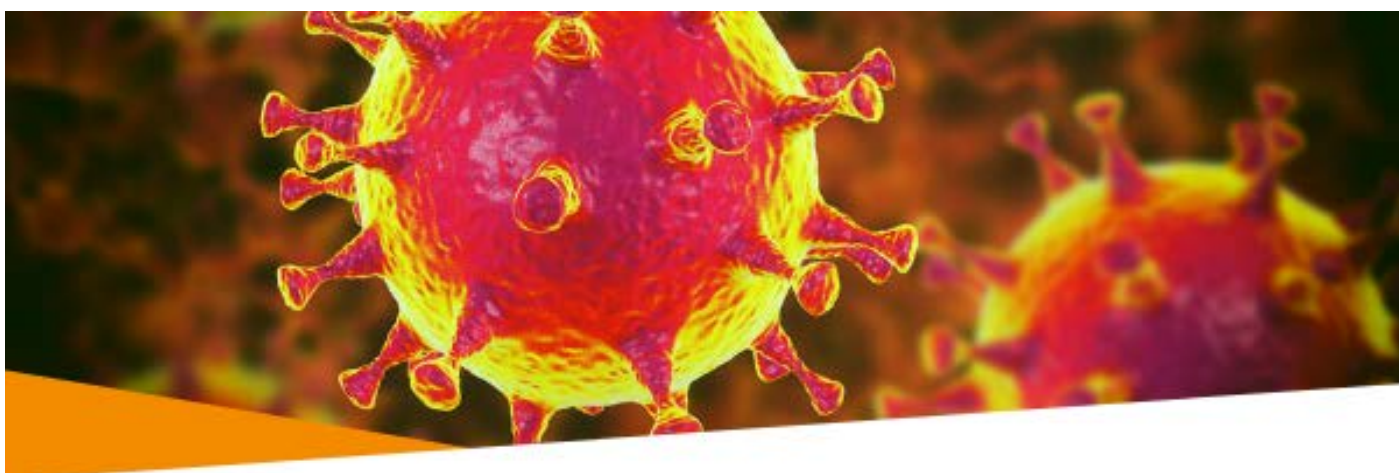


Westfield Health

Employer Guide: COVID-19

Information and advice on how
to prepare your organisation

www.westfieldhealth.com



Preparing your organisation for COVID-19



About Westfield Health

We're dedicated to making a healthy difference to the quality of life of our customers and the communities in which they live and work.

We inspire and empower each other to be the best that we can be, so we can deliver evidence-based health and wellbeing solutions that support people, communities, and workplaces to be healthier.

We're proud of our not for profit heritage and are passionate about making a healthy difference. We have no shareholders, so the more successful we are the more we can give back to those around us.

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Introduction

As COVID-19 is a new strain of coronavirus, we don't yet know exactly how it spreads or have a vaccine to prevent it.

The rapidly changing situation can make it hard to keep up with the latest news and advice, and misinformation from unreliable sources can spread fear.

It's important for HR teams and business leaders to understand the situation, mitigate the risk within their workplace and to put in place plans that would help quickly contain the virus should it affect a member of staff.

This guide will signpost you to reliable sources of information, provide guidance on creating a Coronavirus Response Plan and identify workplace strategies to mitigate risk and provide frameworks for developing your company's response.



Understanding COVID-19

COVID-19 is part of a family of viruses called coronaviruses that are common all over the world; COVID-19 is a new strain of this type of virus.

The main symptoms are fever, a cough and shortness of breath. Sufferers may also feel tired and have aches and pains.

If this progresses to pneumonia it can cause breathing difficulties that require medical support.

Like seasonal flu, it is more dangerous for older people, those with weaker immune systems and people with long-term health conditions.

As the number of cases changes day to day, the most up to date numbers on the [number of cases in the UK](#) can be found on the government's website. The NHS has also provided answers to [frequently asked questions](#).

Government guidelines

The UK government's strategy for handling the outbreak is "contain, delay, research and mitigate".

The aim of this strategy is to limit the number of serious cases so that the NHS doesn't become overwhelmed by high demand for critical care beds.

Isolation

The strategy centres on self-isolation of people who've returned from areas with many cases of the virus or come into contact with those returning travellers.

Isolation involves staying at home and avoiding contact with other people for 14 days. Those who remain symptom free at the end of the two-week period can return back to work and social activities.

More advice on [how to effectively self isolate](#) is available on the NHS website.

Sick pay and self-isolation for COVID-19

As isolation is such a key part of the government strategy, it raises questions about whether employees in isolation due to COVID-19 would receive normal pay, contractual sick pay or statutory sick pay.

There's an important distinction here between contractual sick pay offered by the company and statutory sick pay. When an employee is in isolation, they're not ill so the company policy on sick pay does not necessarily apply.

To help mitigate the spread of the virus and avoid people going to work when ill because of financial concerns, emergency legislation has now been passed that mean employees will receive statutory sick pay from day one of isolation.

Statutory sick pay is £94.25 a week, but employees must normally be earning at least £118 to be eligible. More information on [statutory sick pay](#) is available at gov.uk.

Companies may also choose to offer their normal contractual sick pay on a discretionary basis.

"We've got a statutory sick pay system in this country and self-isolating for medical reasons if you're healthy counts as being sick in the legislation."

Health Secretary, Matt Hancock

Minimising risk

This section focuses on what steps you'll need to take to minimise the risk of someone in your organisation contracting COVID-19 and spreading it in the workplace.

Education and communication are key: containing the virus relies on every single person understanding the risks and steps they personally can take to keep everyone healthy.

This is particularly important when it comes to protecting higher risk members of staff, such as those with a long-term health condition, who are pregnant or who already have a chest infection.

Step 1: Building your team

Whether you're a small business or multinational, the first important step in preparing your organisation is to identify the key people in your business responsible for monitoring the outbreak and preparing and implementing your response.

As well as the HR team and senior business leaders, think about including people who lead customer service, external communications and facilities management.

Make sure that you have up-to-date contact information for all members of your COVID-19 group and consider adding additional communication channels such as a workplace messaging group on Slack or Microsoft Teams or even a WhatsApp group to make sure these key people can be contacted outside the office.

Step 2: Making key decisions

Once you have your team in place, you'll need to assess your current level of preparedness.

If your organisation has a business continuity plan, this is a good starting point for looking at what processes and resources you already have in place to cope with the unexpected.

As a group, you'll then need to think about coronavirus-specific scenarios, how you would respond and any capability gaps.

Use the response plan template to map out your organisation's response to each of the scenarios. Depending on your business, there may be additional scenarios to consider.

You'll also need to consider whether changes need to be made to some of your policies, particularly business travel, sick leave and remote working policies.

Top tip:

Struggling to figure out what to do? Try mapping the process with a flow chart.



Response plan template

Scenario	Response	Gaps
Member of staff comes into contact with someone suspected of having coronavirus.		
Member of staff returns from an infected area.		
Member of staff due to visit affected areas.		
Member of staff has symptoms of coronavirus.		
Member of staff diagnosed with coronavirus.		
Multiple members of staff diagnosed with coronavirus.		

Step 3: Communication

Once you've decided how you'll respond to each of the scenarios, it's important to think about how you'd communicate these to employees, customers and other stakeholders should that situation arise.

Start the process by making a list of all your stakeholders. As well as employees and customers, this might include suppliers, partners or agencies you work with, the media and even other tenants in your office building.

Next, think about all the different ways you have of communicating with these stakeholders.

Use the table below to list all of your internal and external communication channels. Examples are included as a starting point.

Internal channels	External channels
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Email• Instant messaging• Intranet• Team meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social media• Customer service team• Email• Website(s)• Media outreach /press release

Go back to your Response Plan and use it alongside the template on the next page to add which of the stakeholders need to be consulted or informed in each of the scenarios and which communication channel would be the most appropriate.

Reminder:

Ask staff to make sure their personal contact details are up to date. This will mean you can quickly contact staff when needed.



Step 4: Get prepared

One of the most challenging things about an outbreak like COVID-19 is being able to respond in a timely way.

Responding correctly and quickly can make a significant impact when it comes to limiting the impact of this coronavirus on your company.

Looking back at your Response Plan, start to draft out some of the key communications you might use in the different scenarios. This could either be bullet points or a ready-to-go template depending on your available resources.

Response plan template 2

Scenario	Stakeholders	Comms channels
Member of staff comes into contact with someone suspected of having coronavirus.		
Member of staff returns from an infected area.		
Member of staff due to visit affected areas.		
Member of staff has symptoms of coronavirus.		
Member of staff diagnosed with coronavirus.		
Multiple members of staff diagnosed with coronavirus.		

Step 5: Implementation and awareness

Making your team aware of the important role each individual plays in keeping everyone healthy is key to limiting your organisation's risk.

With so much misinformation and scaremongering out there, it's important to do this in a way that helps people feel confident not scared.

Hand hygiene

As with all winter bugs, hand hygiene is crucial to preventing the spread of germs at work and at home.

Though sales of hand sanitiser are soaring, the best way to do this is to wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water.

Help your team understand the proper handwashing technique by printing [this NHS poster](#) and putting it in all bathrooms.

It's not always practical to head to a sink and wash hands with soap and water. Consider giving your staff mini bottles of hand sanitiser for when they're on the go and placing hand sanitiser in high traffic areas such as at reception.

Recognising symptoms

In the event that someone in your company does contract coronavirus, recognising the symptoms is important to limit the number of people they come into contact with.

The main symptoms are:

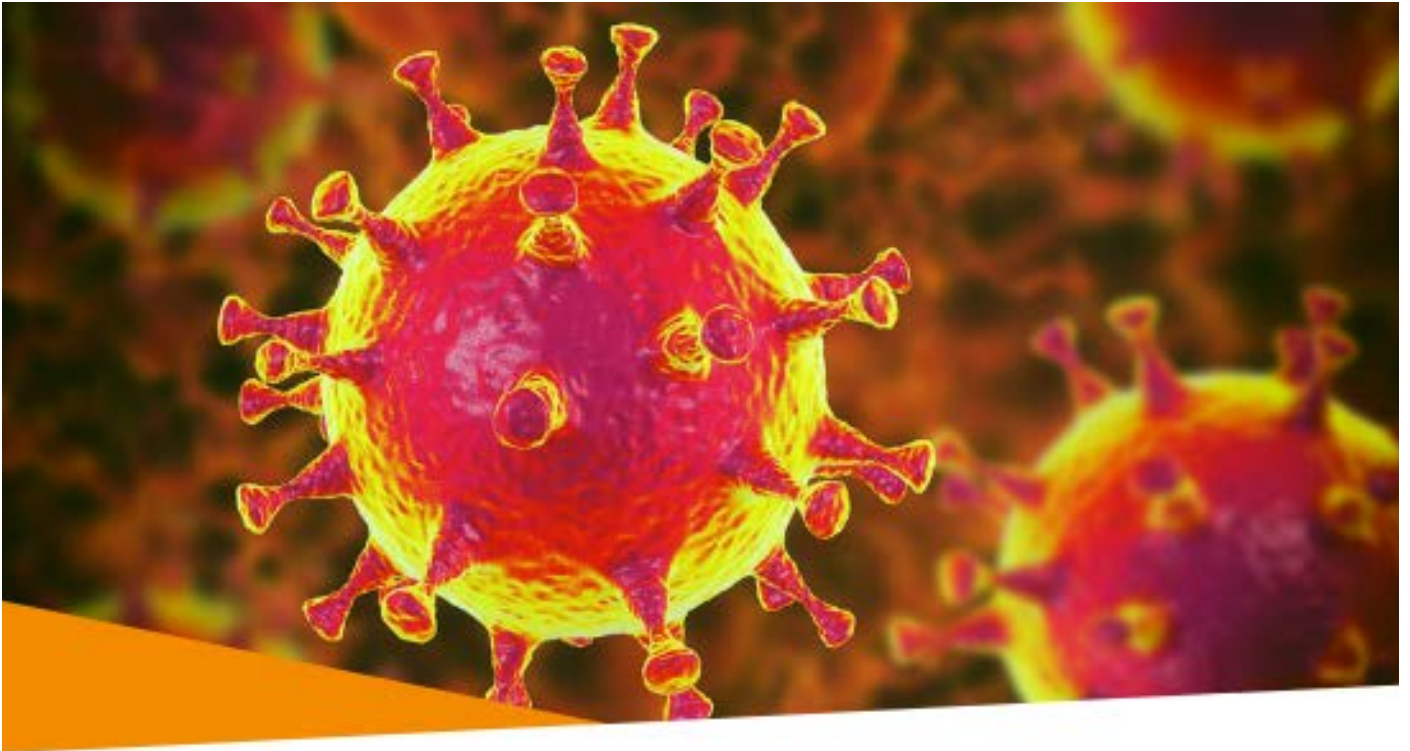
- Headache
- Fever
- A dry cough
- Shortness of breath
- Muscle pain

Employees who think they have coronavirus symptoms should stay at home and contact 111 either by phone or [online](#) to be evaluated.

Referring back to your list of communication channels in step 3, think about the best way to raise awareness of these symptoms within your organisation. It could be a blog post, email or SMS.

Wash your hands when:

- You get to work
- You get home
- Before preparing food or eating
- After blowing your nose, sneezing or coughing



Link library

Below is a list of all the resources covered in this guide:

111 coronavirus symptom online assessment:

<https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19>

FAQs from the NHS:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/common-questions/>

How to wash your hands poster:

http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/idcplg?IdcService=GET_FILE&dID=149685&Rendition=Web

Number of UK cases:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public#number-of-cases>