

## Maintaining a healthy workplace

While serious events occurring in other countries often feel distant and removed from our day-to-day lives, they also provide us with a certain sense of relief, reminding us of how privileged we are to live in a safe country with a relatively strong health care plan. Today, worldwide, we are being reminded of how interconnected and dependent on each other we really are, as we learn we are all vulnerable to infectious illnesses like COVID-19.

COVID-19 is part of a large family of viruses (Coronaviruses) causing illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as SARS and MERS-CoV. Coronaviruses and the flu can be serious for individuals who have a weakened immune system or underlying health conditions. COVID-19 spreads in a similar way as the flu. You could catch it by touching contaminated surfaces or objects, then touching your eyes, nose or mouth, being within one meter of a person with the illness and breathing in droplets coughed out or exhaled.

### Employer Responsibility:

As an employer, it is important to be aware of your responsibility and to ensure you are informed and prepared to help stop the continued spread of infectious illnesses. Does your workplace have good practices in place for regular cleaning of work stations, equipment, facilities and public spaces? Do you have adequate supplies on hand? Are your employees well informed about the benefits or services that may be available to them if they become ill?

### Here are a few tips to assist you in maintaining a healthy workplace:

1. Keep adequate supplies on hand of hand washing soap, hand sanitizer, tissues and disinfectant products.
2. Implement daily cleaning and disinfectant routines for all surfaces (desks, tables, doors, etc.) and objects (telephones, keyboards, POS terminals, fridges, microwaves, etc.), ideally a minimum of twice per day.
3. Provide a place where employees can wash their hands with soap and water or have ready access to hand sanitizer.
4. Encourage regular hand-washing by displaying “How-to” posters and sharing information on proper and thorough handwashing, both at work and at home.
5. Avoid shaking hands, acknowledge others with a nod or bow.
6. Advise employees that should they develop symptoms of an illness, that they may be required to stay at home and/or work remotely (if available) and confirm that if they become ill at work, they may be sent home.
7. Be aware of employees who may have travelled to affected areas with COVID-19 and if they develop a mild cough or low grade fever, advise them to stay at home and self-isolate.
8. Consider and communicate the benefits and risks to an employee for any required business or optional personal travel, particularly to affected areas.

9. Ensure employees who may be at higher risk of serious illness are adequately safe-guarded in the workplace and informed regarding their increased risk.
10. Promote the resources you have available to support your employee's health and well-being, including an employee assistance program if available.
11. Have a plan in place should an employee become ill and contact local health authorities for assistance.
12. Reassure your employees by sharing information, implementing sound cleaning practices and maintaining good supplies.

As an employer, it is important to stay informed and follow official medical advice as it continues to be updated for your community. When we work together both professionally and personally to safeguard our co-workers, friends and neighbours within our workplace and community we can reduce the impact and spread of an infectious illness like COVID-19 or the flu.

Here are some additional resources to help you stay informed:

- <https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/getting-workplace-ready-for-covid-19.pdf>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- <http://www.bccdc.ca/>
- <https://medicalstaff.islandhealth.ca/news-events/coronavirus-updates>

Our team at **TallSky Consulting** is here to support all of your HR requirements and we share your desire to enhance and protect the health and well-being of our communities and workplaces.

Given current events, we are available to provide the following services:

- Evaluating remote-work policies and practices
- Remote interview preparation and facilitation
- Assessing workplace readiness plans

**DISCLAIMER:** *The information is provided as general information on these topics, and given the rapidly evolving environment, they may not be relevant with recent updates or changes on the topic. These materials are not meant to be a substitute for specific legal advice. Please do not rely solely upon this information for making decisions regarding employees in your workplace.*