COVID-19: PREVENTING THE SPREAD IN THE WORKPLACE

Safety ToolBox Talks BLR®

This talk discusses practices to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace, including how the disease is transmitted, symptoms of COVID-19, and ways to stay safe and healthy.

Materials to have on hand:

- Hand sanitizer

- Disinfectants and cleaning products in use at the facility

- The facility's emergency preparedness or pandemic plan, if applicable

Items for attendees to consider during the talk:

- How is COVID-19 spread?

- How can you protect yourself from exposure to COVID-19?

TALK

Coronavirus disease 2019, or COVID-19, is a respiratory illness caused by a virus in the group of viruses known as coronaviruses. Other coronaviruses include Middle East respiratory syndrome, or MERS, and severe acute respiratory syndrome, or SARS. Most cases of COVID-19 are mild, but the disease can become serious, and even fatal, in some people who contract it. Therefore, it's important to take steps to prevent the spread of infection in the workplace.

Symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, cough, and shortness of breath. Some people may also experience chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, or new loss of taste or smell. In severe cases, patients can develop pneumonia and multiorgan failure. In general, older people and those with preexisting medical conditions are more likely to experience severe or fatal cases of COVID-19, but people without these risk factors can also become severely ill.

COVID-19 mainly spreads between people who are in close contact with one another and through respiratory droplets that are produced when an infected person talks, coughs, or sneezes. It is also possible to get COVID-19 by touching a surface or an object on which a virus-containing respiratory droplet has landed and then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes. It is possible to spread the virus before developing symptoms, and some people become carriers without ever developing outward symptoms of the illness.

Talk Date: _____

Location: _____

_____

Supervisor/
Presenter: _____

Attendees: _____

_____

_____

Comments: _____

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Because there is currently no vaccine or specific treatment for COVID-19, the best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed. To prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other infectious diseases, remember the acronym **WASH**, which stands for **Wash, Avoid, Sanitize,** and **Hold:**

- **Wash** your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after a cough or sneeze, after using the restroom, before eating, and after touching a surface like a door handle or coffeepot that has been touched by many people. If soap and water aren't available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol. Apply hand sanitizer to the palm of one hand, rub your hands together, and rub the gel all over the surfaces of your hands and fingers until your hands are dry. This should take about 20 seconds.

- **Avoid** close contact with people who are sick. Stay at least 6 feet from people outside your household and minimize unnecessary physical contact in general, such as shaking hands. During an outbreak of the virus, avoid crowds and large gatherings and limit your trips outside your home as much as possible. Take extra precautions if you or someone you are in close contact with is in one of the groups at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19.

- **Sanitize** surfaces that people frequently touch, such as microwave and door handles, bathroom fixtures, countertops, phones, copiers and printers, elevator buttons, shared hand tools, and machinery controls. Use a commercial disinfectant or a solution of 1 part bleach to 10 parts water.

- **Hold** the inside of your elbow to your mouth to cover coughs and sneezes to stop the spread of the virus through hand contact. Try to cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, and properly dispose of the tissue immediately after use.

If you develop symptoms of COVID-19 call your healthcare provider. He or she will determine whether you need to be tested for COVID-19. If you have the virus, stay home except to get necessary medical care, and stay away from other people in your home as much as possible.

[If applicable, discuss telecommuting procedures and travel or sick leave policies applicable to COVID-19.]

Because people can spread COVID-19 without showing symptoms, during an outbreak, it is a good idea to wear a cloth face covering in public places. Follow the current guidance of your state or local health agency to determine when this step is necessary. Healthcare professionals and others who have direct contact with COVID-19 patients should use approved respiratory protection that follows the latest guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, or CDC.

Finally, it is important to remember that COVID-19 is not associated with any particular nationality or racial group. Although people who live in or travel to affected areas have a higher risk of catching and spreading the virus, anyone who is exposed to the virus may become infected. It is important to avoid stereotyping, making negative remarks, and behaving unkindly to people based on assumptions. The most important thing you can do to protect yourself, your family, and your community from COVID-19 is to follow the good hygiene practices we discussed.

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