

Risk of Exposure to a known COVID 19 Case in the Workplace

There are many variable which will influence the risk to co-workers in which there was a known case of COVID 19. Generally, transmission is influenced by the duration, intensity and frequency of contact.

- If you only share a hallway with a coworker who is positive for COVID 19, your risk of exposure is low.
- If you share a workspace or restroom with a coworker who tested positive, your risk of exposure is medium.

How is COVID-19 spread?

The virus is thought to spread mainly from person to-person, including:

- Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).
- Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.
- It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has SARS-CoV-2 on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the primary way the virus spreads.

It is also necessary to consider when exposure occurred relative to the symptom history of the infected person. People are thought to be most contagious when they are most symptomatic (i.e., experiencing fever, cough, and/or shortness of breath). Some spread might be possible before people show symptoms; there have been reports of this type of asymptomatic transmission with this new coronavirus, but this is also not thought to be the main way the virus spreads. *If the coworker did not have symptoms while working in the office before testing positive, there is an extremely low risk of infection for their colleagues.*

Close contacts should monitor their health; they should call their healthcare provider right away if they develop symptoms suggestive of COVID-19 (e.g., fever, cough, shortness of breath). People at high-risk for the severe consequences of infection, and who believe they have had close contact with a known infected person, should take extra care to monitor their health. Based upon available information to date, those at high-risk for severe illness from COVID-19 include:

- People aged 65 years and older
- People who live in a nursing home or long-term care facility
- Other high-risk conditions could include:
 - People with chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma
 - People who have serious heart conditions
 - People who are immunocompromised including cancer treatment
 - People of any age with severe obesity (body mass index [BMI] >40) or certain underlying medical conditions, particularly if not well controlled, such as those with diabetes, renal failure, or liver disease might also be at risk
- People who are pregnant should be monitored since they are known to be at risk for severe viral illness, however, to date data on COVID-19 has not shown there to be an increased risk to pregnant women.

This link describes procedures to disinfect a facility where a person was sick:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/disinfecting-building-facility.html>