

# How to stay safe at work and home as an essential employee

As COVID-19 continues to spread, many businesses and services have been classified as nonessential, sending employees home until the threat diminishes. Workers who are considered essential provide services that keep communities running, such as those who work in healthcare, law enforcement, emergency services, utilities, mail and package delivery, transportation, financial services and grocery retail.<sup>1</sup>

While some workers can fulfill their duties remotely at home, others must still report to their workplaces. These essential employees risk exposure to COVID-19 every time they go to work. They also risk bringing the virus home and exposing their family members.

If you are one of the many people still working to provide essential services for your community, there are some daily habits you can practice that will keep you, your coworkers and your family safe during this pandemic.

## **Staying safe in the workplace**

According to the CDC, COVID-19 is typically spread from person to person through a sneeze or cough. In general, people must be within about six feet of one another to transmit the virus.<sup>2</sup> To protect yourself and others in your workplace, get in the habit of doing the following things:<sup>3</sup>

- Check in with your employer about specific policies they have put in place to keep you and your coworkers safe
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after sneezing, coughing or blowing your nose
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue or your elbow
- Clean hands in between handwashing with a sanitizer that has at least 60 percent alcohol
- Stay home if you are sick or have any coronavirus symptoms and encourage your coworkers to do the same
- Practice social distancing by staying at least six feet apart from others as work duties permit
- Clean and disinfect surfaces that you and your coworkers frequently touch on a routine basis
- Wear appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) like gloves or a mask as directed while in the workplace
- Disinfect your lunch space before and after eating
- Avoid touching your face
- Keep personal items, including your cell phone, away from work areas

- Disinfect your phone, name tag or ID badge, eyewear and any work supplies regularly
- Avoid touching other employees' workstations, devices or tools – if you must share, clean and disinfect before and after use
- Talk to your employer about what else would help you feel safe and secure at work

### **Keeping your home and family safe**

In addition to practicing good hygiene, there are further steps you can take to keep the coronavirus out of your home and prevent exposing your family. As you transition from work to home, practice these safety tips:<sup>4</sup>

- Set up an area outside your home to isolate any items that cannot be washed and you do not want to bring inside
- Leave your work shoes outside the house
- Remove your work clothes immediately, place into a designated bag or hamper and wash with detergent
- Sanitize your hands and cell phone before coming inside
- Shower as soon as possible after arriving home

Feeling stressed and anxious about being an essential worker during the COVID-19 pandemic? Reach out to your Employee Assistance Program (EAP). EAP can help connect you with the support you need.

### **Sources:**

<sup>1</sup>Christopher C. Krebs, [“Advisory Memorandum on Identification of Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers During COVID-19 Response.”](#) U.S. Department of Homeland Security (2020), accessed April 23, 2020.

<sup>2</sup>[“How COVID-19 Spreads.”](#) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2020), accessed April 23, 2020.

<sup>3</sup>[“Keeping the workplace safe.”](#) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2020), accessed April 23, 2020.

<sup>4</sup>[“COVID-19: How to stay safe when you come home from work.”](#) Intermountain Healthcare (2020), accessed April 23, 2020.

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