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Tool Box Talk

Pandemic Preparedness: Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Instructor: _____

Location: _____

Date: _____

It must be noted that at the time this was written March 9, 2020 Coronavirus was not yet considered a pandemic by the World Health Organization. The specific criteria for a pandemic are not universally defined, but there are three general criteria: a virus that can cause illness or death; sustained person-to-person transmission of that virus; and evidence of spread throughout the world.

Regardless of whether or not it is considered a pandemic the same basic procedures apply.

What is coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)? Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. Coronaviruses, in general, are a large family of viruses that are common in people and many different species of animals, including camels, cattle, cats, and bats. Rarely, animal coronaviruses can infect people and then spread between people, this is one of those cases as were [MERS-CoV](#) (2012), and [SARS-CoV](#) (2003).

Can people in the U.S. get COVID-19? Yes. COVID-19 is spreading from person to person in parts of the United States. Risk of infection with COVID-19 is higher for people who are close contacts of someone known to have COVID-19, for example healthcare workers, or household members. Other people at higher risk for infection are those who live in or have recently been in an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19. At this time, March 9, 2020, there were around 500 cases in the US. Current count can be found here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-in-us.html>

How does COVID-19 spread? The virus is thought to spread mainly 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. It also may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.



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What are the symptoms of COVID-19? Patients with COVID-19 have had mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms of • fever • cough • shortness of breath. Severe complications include: pneumonia in both lungs, multi-organ failure and in some cases death.

Disease Control Procedures

Disease Control Supplies

For employees to practice disease control recommendations properly, the following supplies should be regularly available:

- Soap (at all hand-washing sinks)
- Tissues
- Hand sanitizer (minimum 60% alcohol content)
- Office cleaning and disinfecting supplies
- Disposable towels
- Trash bags
- Personal protective equipment

Disinfect Surfaces

During a pandemic, thorough workplace disinfection measures may be required to minimize the transmission through surfaces. Simple cleaning with a damp cloth may not kill or remove viruses, therefore disinfection is required for this purpose.

Items to disinfect

- Surfaces that are frequently touched by hands should be cleaned and disinfected often, at least daily.
- Surfaces to disinfect include commonly touched surfaces like doorknobs, water-cooler taps, telephones, and other items that are touched by various people throughout the day.

Heightened Hygiene Practices

Employers should request that employees escalate their use of healthy habits to limit the spread of disease. Disseminate reminders throughout the work site. Key messages include:

- Wash your hands often with soap or use hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth with un-washed hands.
- Cover your cough and sneeze.
- Stay home when sick. Symptoms include:
 - Fever (temperature greater than 100.4° F)
 - Chills, shivering
 - Muscle aches
 - Sore throat
 - Dry cough
 - Headache
 - Fatigue (extreme tiredness)
- Avoid close contact (6 ft or less) with others including skin-to-skin contact (shaking hands).



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- All persons (employees and clients) in the workplace should wear a mask or covering over the mouth and nose when in the same room as another person.
- Clean and disinfect commonly used surfaces.
- Minimize close contact with sick persons.

Social Distancing

Social distancing refers to a disease control strategy that includes limiting or altering the frequency and closeness of people in order to reduce the spread of contagious diseases from one person to another. During a pandemic people may be advised to stay at least 6 feet apart.

Employers may utilize the following social distancing strategies to reduce close contact among individuals.

- Telecommuting
- Teleconferences
- Staggered work shifts
- Face-to-face barriers
- Distance between work sites

Restrict workplace entry of people with symptoms

During a pandemic, individuals with symptoms should be encouraged to stay out of the work setting. Individuals with symptoms (or those caring for ill family members) may be asked to stay home and are encouraged to stay home until they are no longer contagious.

CDC:

Coronavirus <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

Pandemic Preparedness <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/pandemic-resources/index.htm>

OSHA Website:

<https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/>

OSHA Publication on Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19

<https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf>