



## **COVID-19: Recommended measures for places of work**

The outbreak and (hitherto) limited spread of the COVID-19 virus has given rise to concern. OHSA emphasizes that whereas it remains an employer's responsibility to take all reasonable measures to safeguard the occupational health and safety of all workers at all times, the measures required to be taken should be based on facts (and especially not on unsubstantiated information or irrational fears) concerning the severity of the risk and the likelihood of occurrence. On the basis of the available evidence, the measures which should be taken at workplaces are the same as those taken against the seasonal influenza.

Employers are therefore urged to encourage workers who may experience coronavirus-like symptoms (fatigue, coughing, shortness of breath, and fever) to stay at home until advised by a medical practitioner that they may return to work. Normal workplace policies applicable to the utilisation of sick leave should remain in force.

Personal hygiene remains the most important tool to limit the spread of this viral infection (and other communicable diseases) and to reduce the risk of workers being infected at work.

Furthermore, the following simple measures should be brought to the attention of all workers, either by using internal communication channels (email, intranet etc) or by affixing posters where they can be viewed by workers.

1. Persons should cover their mouth and nose when they sneeze or cough, and preferably use a disposable tissue which should be disposed of in a bin immediately after use.
2. Hands should be frequently washed well with soap and water (at least for 20 seconds) or cleaned with an alcohol-based hand disinfectant in liquid or gel form.
3. Hand contact with the mouth, nose or eyes should be avoided.
4. Close contact with other persons should also be avoided. When speaking to persons, especially if they experience flu-like symptoms, a minimum distance of 1m should be observed.

These messages should also emphasize the fact that whereas there is no cause for concern, sensible precautions should be taken to avoid the spread of the disease.

Steps should also be taken to ensure adequate ventilation and fresh air circulation throughout the workplace.

It should be emphasised that there is **no** evidence in support of wearing face masks to cover the mouth and nose as a **matter of routine**.

Employers are also urged to review travel requirements, especially to areas where COVID-19 is prevalent. An employer should also consult the Superintendence of Public Health regarding any specific measures that should be taken before allowing a worker to return to work following a trip abroad.

Specific arrangements have also been made by the Health Division and the Superintendence of Public Health regarding the transit of persons and goods at Malta's ports and airports – queries regarding such arrangements in place should be addressed directly to the said entities.

**Verify the source of information and do not share posts that are not based on facts or originate from unreliable sources.**

**OHSA: 26<sup>th</sup> February 2020.**