

Returning to Work During COVID-19



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A Note from Chief Medical Officer/Executive Vice President Nishant Anand, MD, FACEP

The COVID-19 pandemic has become a new way of life for us. We hope that soon, more employees will be able to return to work. Enclosed, you'll find valuable material that will hopefully assist you in making the return to work successful and safe for your team members.

As a leader, you'll want to portray a clear, accurate and concise message about your organization and how it'll provide a safe environment for your team.

Communication and honesty are of the utmost importance. How you handle delicate situations when someone displays symptoms of COVID-19 is also important. As your trusted partner, BayCare is here to help. By providing redeployment suggestions and answering day-to-day questions, our team is ready to assist you.

Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to guide you through this uncertain time for our community. Someday, we'll look back on this as a great learning experience that has strengthened us all.

Nishant Anand, MD



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[BayCareEmployerSolutions.org](https://www.baycareemployer.com)

To keep up with the latest
information, visit
[BayCare.org/Newsroom](https://www.baycare.org/newsroom).

You can also follow us on social
media channels using [@BayCare](https://twitter.com/BayCare).

Sources:
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
Cleveland Clinic

Introduction



Coronavirus (COVID-19) is a respiratory disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. It has spread from China to many other countries around the world, including the United States. Depending on the severity of COVID-19's international impacts, outbreak conditions—including those rising to the level of a pandemic—can affect all aspects of daily life, including travel, trade, tourism, food supplies and financial markets.

To reduce the impact of COVID-19 outbreak conditions on businesses, workers, consumers and the public, it's important for all employers to plan now for COVID-19. For employers who've already planned for influenza pandemics, planning for COVID-19 may involve updating plans to address the specific exposure risks, sources of exposure, routes of transmission and other unique characteristics of this virus. Employers who haven't prepared for pandemic events should prepare themselves and their employees as far in advance as possible of potentially worsening outbreak conditions. Lack of planning can result in a cascade of failures as employers attempt to address challenges of COVID-19 with insufficient resources, and workers who might not be adequately trained for jobs they may have to perform under pandemic conditions.

This guide is intended for planning purposes. Employers and employees should use this planning guide to help identify risk levels in workplace settings and to determine any appropriate control measures to implement. Additional guidance may be needed as COVID-19 outbreak conditions change, including as new information about the virus, its transmission and impacts becomes available.

Symptoms of COVID-19

COVID-19 infection can cause illness ranging from mild to severe and, in some cases, can be fatal. Symptoms typically include fever, cough and shortness of breath, while some people reported they experienced other non-respiratory symptoms. Some people experienced no symptoms at all and are referred to as asymptomatic cases. According to the CDC, symptoms of COVID-19 may appear in as few as two days or as long as 14 days after exposure.

Levels of Protection

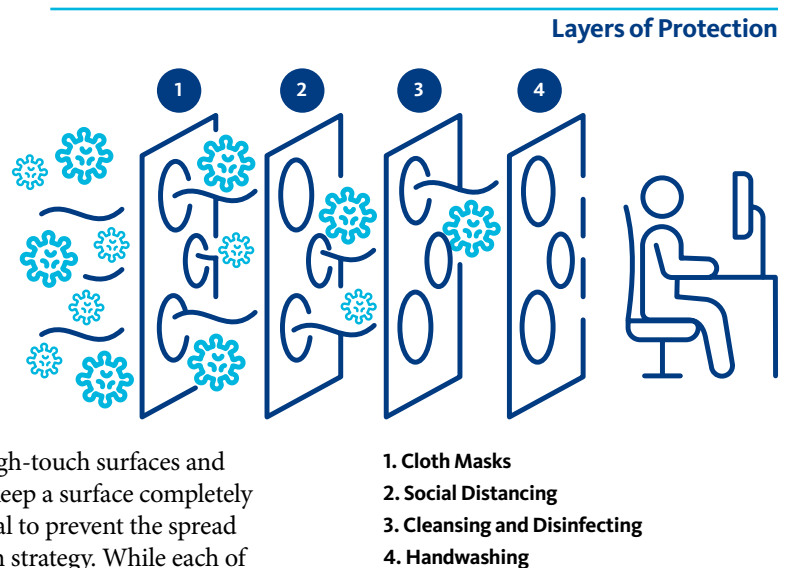
This guide describes ways to keep the safety of your employees and customers as the main focus of your COVID-19 planning and response. While no single tactic is 100 percent effective, when used together, they add layers of protection. These proven practices address a variety of risk points and should be considered as a collection of actions to keep your workplace safe in the era of COVID-19.

Below is a diagram of the Swiss Cheese Model by James Reason, PhD, that many industries have adopted to improve their safety. This model explains that there are inherent risks in any work setting; however, most of the time these risks are never realized because safeguards have been put in place to prevent them. The layers of Swiss cheese in this model represent these safeguards. Every process has “holes” that can line up and lead to an error, accident or “hazard,” as Reason described it.

The COVID-19 pandemic requires multiple layers of protection to keep the workplace safe. The layers of Swiss cheese are the safeguards of your organization. When used consistently, the holes in any individual layer of protection should be offset by the strengths of a different layer of intervention.

Per Reason’s model, the more layers of effective interventions that are implemented, the less likely your business will contribute to the spread of COVID-19. For example, face coverings can slow the spread of COVID-19 and help prevent presymptomatic carriers from unknowingly transmitting it to others. However, no mask is 100 percent effective. The additional layer in this situation is to practice social distancing and maintain a 6 foot distance from others in your workplace. However, this isn’t always possible. Cleaning and disinfecting high-touch surfaces and equipment is also extremely important, but it’s very difficult to keep a surface completely disinfected between cleanings. Frequent handwashing is essential to prevent the spread of the virus, and is just one piece of a larger infection-prevention strategy. While each of these interventions isn’t perfect, when used in conjunction with a broader range of safety practices, the risk of COVID-19 transmission is significantly reduced.

This guide provides an overview of these safeguards to help prevent the risk of infection spreading in your workplace and tools to support your workforce through these trying times.



General Recommendations When You're at Work

The most effective way for employees to protect themselves:



Wear a face mask

While in public, protect yourself and others by wearing a face covering, particularly where it's difficult to maintain a 6 foot distance from others. Avoid touching your face.



Cover your mouth and nose

When you cough or sneeze, cover your mouth and nose with a tissue, not your hands. Make sure to dispose of your tissue in a trash can. When there are no tissues available, you should always cough/sneeze into your elbow, never your bare hands.



Practice social and physical distancing

If possible, work from home, engage in social distancing, maintain a 6 foot distance from others and avoid crowded places and group gatherings.



Wash your hands

Stop the spread of germs by washing your hands often. Use hand sanitizer if soap and water aren't available.



Avoid care facilities

Don't visit nursing homes, long-term care facilities or retirement communities, unless providing critical assistance.



Clean and disinfect

Use disinfectant to clean frequently touched surfaces such as phones, keyboards, doorknobs, handles and faucets.



Stay home when you're sick

If you want or need to connect with your health care providers, first do so by phone or through virtual visits. Go to [BayCareAnywhere.org](https://www.baycareanywhere.org) for telehealth visits.



Maintain healthy habits

Get plenty of sleep, eat healthy foods, drink water and exercise to help keep your immune system strong.



Cafeteria and break room areas:

- Be vigilant in your break areas. Clean diligently on a regular basis while employees are using the café area. Assess your ice machine, as well as all the kitchen appliances such as microwave, toaster and refrigerator.
- If you don't have an automatic ice machine, it's suggested that you provide disposable gloves to access the ice, especially if you use a scooper. If using ice trays, gloves should definitely be used.
- Keep a large supply of hand sanitizer to use after touching kitchen gadgets. Also, encourage handwashing after getting food.
- Move away from buffet-style lunches. Instead, provide individually wrapped food as well as individually wrapped utensils.
- If celebrating an employee's birthday in the office, have one person cut the cake, and wear a mask and gloves when distributing the pieces of cake.
- Distance lunch tables and chairs 6 feet apart.

Follow these guidelines to help keep a safe environment as your workplace opens.

Face Masks

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends cloth face covers to potentially help prevent transmission when used as a complement to social distancing. They aren't a replacement for adequate distancing.

How to Wear a Mask or Face Cover

The following are recommendations from the CDC:

- Wash your hands before putting on your face cover.
- Put it over your nose and mouth and secure it under your chin.
- Try to fit it snugly against the sides of your face.

Make sure your mask or face cover:

- Fits snugly but comfortably against the sides of the face
- Completely covers the nose and mouth
- Is secured with ties or ear loops
- Includes multiple layers of fabric
- Allows for breathing without restriction
- Can be washed and machine dried without damage or change to shape

How to Keep Masks and Face Covers Clean

Cloth face covers should be washed after each use, either by hand or in a washing machine. Make sure not to touch your eyes, nose, mouth or face when removing a worn face cover. Wash your hands immediately after removing them, as they may carry infectious contaminants.



Correct



Mask Goatee



Mask Necklace



Mask Visor

Handwashing

Handwashing is one of the best ways to protect yourself and your family from getting sick. Wash your hands:

- Whenever they look dirty
- Before, during and after preparing food
- Before eating food
- Before and after contact with a sick person
- Before and after treating a cut, sore or wound
- After using the toilet or changing diapers
- When entering or exiting the workplace
- After blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing
- After touching animals or animal waste
- After touching garbage, bodily fluids or any time you think your hands might be dirty

Proper Handwashing Technique

1



Wet your hands
with clean, running water (*warm or cold*)
and apply soap.

2

20 Seconds



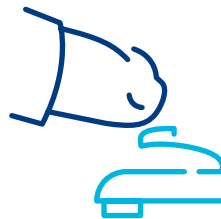
Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap.
Lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers and under your nails. Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds which is the time it takes you to sing the “Happy Birthday” song from beginning to end twice.

3



Rinse your hands well
under clean, running water.

4



Turn off the water
with your elbow or a clean towel.

5



Dry your hands
using a clean paper towel or air dry them.

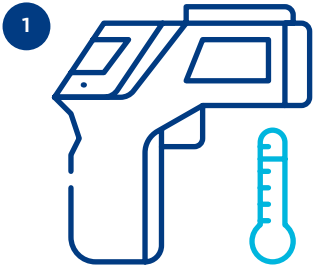
Using Hand Sanitizer

Washing hands with soap and water is the best way to get rid of germs in most situations. If soap and water aren't readily available, you can use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 70 percent alcohol.

Screening Employees

Confirm that Employees Aren't Experiencing Symptoms

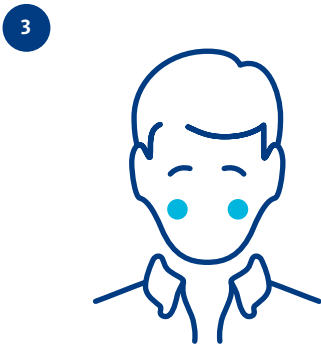
The CDC recommends screening employees using the following steps:



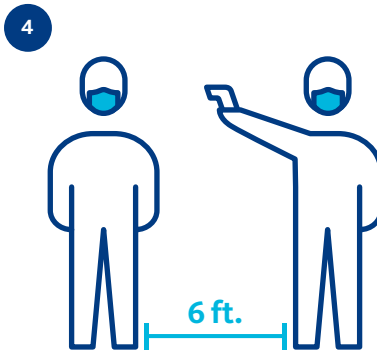
1 **Have employees' temperatures taken** when they arrive at work. Confirm that their temperature is less than 100.4°F (38.0°C). Reusable thermometers must be cleaned between each check.



2 **Confirm that they aren't experiencing any symptoms** (coughing or shortness of breath).



3 **Look for signs of illness,** such as flushed cheeks or fatigue.



4 **When taking the employee's temperature,** the screener should wear a mask and gloves, and the employee should wear a mask.

Safety for Screeners

Use barriers and partitions and have screeners wear proper PPE.

- If able, screener should stand behind a physical barrier to protect their face.
- Screener should wear a face mask and disposable gloves.
- Screener must clean their hands after screening each employee and use a new pair of disposable gloves.

Preparing the Workplace



Appropriate measures and precautions must be taken by employers to reopen their businesses, including putting appropriate controls in place, assessing exposure risk and investigating potential exposure sources. Employees must maintain safe practices such as frequent handwashing, using face coverings, staying home if sick and social distancing.

Clean and Disinfect

The same level of cleaning won't be necessary in all areas. Routine cleaning is needed for areas unoccupied for seven or more days. High-touch surfaces such as doorknobs, sinks, elevator buttons, etc., should be prioritized and disinfected regularly.

- Consider the size and availability of current environmental services, the type and availability of cleaning products and what PPE is appropriate for those who are cleaning.
- Clean visibly dirty surfaces with soap and water before disinfection. Use a disinfectant that's EPA-approved against COVID-19 and read the label to make sure it meets your needs.
- Clean or replace air filters regularly, according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Perform routine cleaning and disinfection consistently. Disinfect frequently touched surfaces at least daily.

Distancing

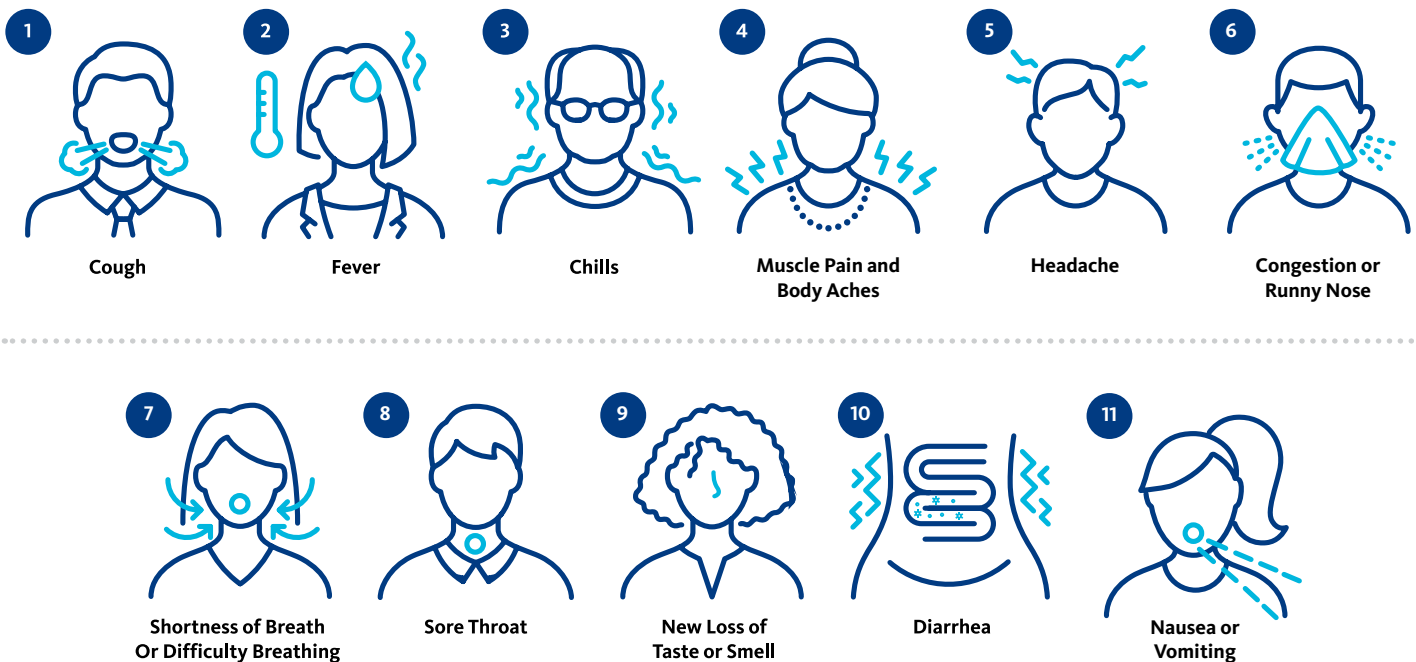


The workplace will need to look and feel very different than it did before COVID-19. Although we're reentering the workplace, maintaining social distance will still be important for the safety of all employees. Social distancing means avoiding large gatherings. Physical distancing means maintaining distance (*at least 6 feet*) from others when possible. Businesses should consider the following distancing strategies:

- Set limits on how many people are in your building at one time. This may mean changing your policies to allow flexible worksites (*e.g. work from home*) and flexible work hours (*e.g. staggered shifts*).
- Altering meeting practices to phone or video rather than in-person meetings, whenever possible. When a physical meeting is required, ensure that there can be 6 feet of space between each employee, insist that all employees wear masks and clean and disinfect meeting room surfaces.
- Postpone nonessential travel and events.
- Stagger break times.
- Increase physical space between employees. This may include:
 - Adding extra space between workspaces and using a diagonal cubicle strategy to stagger employees, to ensure at least 6 feet of distance
 - Encouraging employees to avoid elevators
 - When possible, create one-way traffic flow through aisles and hallways

Symptoms of Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Symptoms can range from mild to severe and can appear two to 14 days after you've been exposed to the virus that causes COVID-19. Know the symptoms of COVID-19, which can include:



Seek medical care immediately if someone has emergency warning signs of COVID-19:

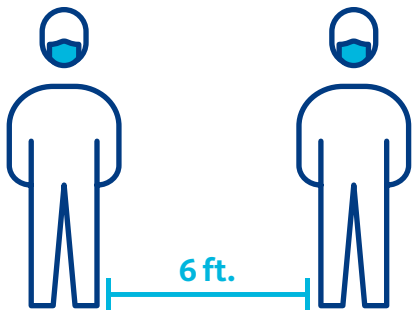
- Trouble breathing
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- New confusion
- Inability to wake or stay awake
- Bluish lips or face

This list isn't all the possible symptoms. Call your medical provider for any other symptoms that are severe or are concerning to you.

Reference: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Stop Spreading Germs

Help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases like COVID-19:



Stay at least 6 feet
(about two arm's length) from other people.



Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue,
then throw the tissue in the trash
and wash your hands.



Stay home when you're sick,
except to get medical care.



Don't touch
your eyes, nose and mouth.



Clean and disinfect frequently
touched objects and surfaces.



When in public, wear a mask
or face cover over your nose and mouth.



Wash your hands often
with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

Reference: Centers for Disease Control (CDC)

Communicating with Your Employees



Here are some practices to consider in order to establish an effective communication strategy:

- Leadership involvement is critical and should include regular communication with your employees. Communication should include valuable and consistent information to your employees and other key stakeholders.
- As things are constantly changing, aim to send out weekly emails to communicate these changes.
- Encourage employees to be vigilant about procedures and to take care at home to protect their families.
- Remember to praise your employees and communicate your appreciation.
- Remain open-minded and flexible when addressing your communication needs.
- Consider sharing recommendations for travel as things open up. Note the protocols for quarantine if an employee is visiting certain areas of the U.S.
- Designate a point person to review and observe the workplace. This person will enforce these new procedures in the workplace.
- Respond to team member questions often.

Managing Symptoms

Educate yourself and your employees about the symptoms of COVID-19. Below are common symptoms related to COVID-19 and how to manage a situation when an employee might have symptoms. Symptoms can range from very mild to severe. For an up-to-date list of symptoms, visit the CDC's website.

Symptoms to Watch For

Patients with confirmed infection reported these symptoms (*as of March 2021*):

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

Handling an Employee Who Becomes Ill

Follow these steps if an employee begins to show symptoms in the workplace or feels ill during the workday:

- Immediately separate the ill employee
- Send the employee home and instruct them to follow up with their health care provider. BayCareAnywhere® is a great option for telehealth visits.
- Close off all areas that the ill employee used. Deep clean the area with disinfectant following CDC guidelines.
- **The ill employee should be symptom free for at least three days before returning to work.**

Handling an Employee Who's Been Exposed

Follow these steps for employees who've been exposed to someone, but don't have symptoms:

- Provide temperature checks for employees when they arrive to work each day.
- Disinfect and clean work spaces, especially those that the ill employee shared.

The Power of Keeping Calm

In unprecedented times like these, the stress of the situation often hurts our personal relationships and our own mental health. Anxiety thrives on uncertainty, so it's not uncommon for people to feel emotional distress in times of crisis. Whether it's a public health crisis, natural disaster or other stressors big or small, adopting some simple ways to manage your fears and anxieties can help improve your overall emotional, physical and spiritual well-being.

Let go and meditate.

You can't control what others do, but you can control how you respond. Exercise the power you have over yourself, be present in the moment by focusing on your immediate environment, and mentally take stock of the things and people around you.

Unplug.

Turn off the television and put down your phone. Nonstop media coverage can be overwhelming and have a negative impact on your emotional well-being. Use your time to practice mindfulness, take a walk or talk to friends and family.

Take care of yourself.

Stress can have a negative impact on your immune system, potentially leaving you more vulnerable to viruses. Take care of your overall well-being by getting enough sleep, eating smart and exercising.

Practice gratitude.

When everything seems to be going wrong, take a moment to reflect on what's going right. Gratitude doesn't need to be reserved for momentous occasions like winning a prize. You can also be thankful for something as simple as a great cup of coffee or finding money in a pocket.

Reach out.

If you're experiencing increased anxiety, fear or stress surrounding COVID-19, it may be beneficial to seek professional help. Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) provide free and confidential counseling services and support, and can help you identify positive coping mechanisms.

Contact BayCare at (800) 878-5470 or BayCareEAP@BayCare.org to learn more about EAP options for your organization.



Resiliency: Bouncing Back When Things Get Tough



In times of uncertainty and tragedy, some people struggle to keep going while others adapt to life-changing events more easily. Being resilient is what makes the difference. Resiliency is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy or significant stress. It's the ability to recognize our own personal power and use it to overcome adversity. Simply put, resiliency helps us bounce back when life gets hard.

Resilience isn't a trait people either have or don't have—it involves behaviors, thoughts and actions that can be learned and developed. Those inner resources and abilities developed from past experiences become a positive starting place for solutions to today's challenges.

It's easy to slip into negative thought patterns, but maintaining a positive view of yourself, your strengths and your opportunities for growth can help build resiliency. Being aware of your strengths makes you stronger. Your resiliency will increase as you recognize all you've accomplished and survived in life. You did it before, you can do it again.

Checklist for Redeployment of Workforce

Upon entering the building:

- If using the elevator, no more than two people should be in it at a time (*remain at opposite side of the elevator*).
- If using the stairs, employees should be wearing a mask; don't touch handrails if possible.
- Increase physical space between employees at the worksite.
- Keep doors open when appropriate.
- Make hallways one way, if possible.
- Space all seating at least 6 feet apart.
- Wear masks in common areas.
- Offer COVID-19 viral and/or antibody testing to employees before they return to work.
- Check the temperature of everyone entering the office/building.
- PPE is required (*mask, gloves*).
- Use infrared thermometers (*temperature must be below 100.4 degrees*).
- Encourage sick employees to stay home.

When attending meetings:

- Avoid closing doors, if possible, and clean door handles regularly.
- Consider using videoconferencing or teleconferencing when possible for work-related meetings and gatherings.
- For in-person meetings:
 - Hold meetings in open, well-ventilated spaces.
 - Space everyone at least 6 feet apart.
 - Wear masks.
 - Disinfect the meeting room before the start of the meeting and after the meeting.

Maintain a healthy work environment once inside the office:

- Once inside the office, wash your hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer, and avoid touching your face.
- Routinely clean and disinfect all frequently touched surfaces in the office—workstations, keyboards, telephones, handrails and doorknobs.
- Use plexiglass shields for low-sitting cubicles, no face-to-face directions unless wearing masks, and wipe down surfaces daily.
- Keep your mask clean by using a clean Ziploc bag to protect its integrity.
- Discourage employees from using other employees' phones, desks, offices or other work tools and equipment, when possible. If necessary, clean and disinfect them before and after use.
- Provide disposable wipes so that commonly used surfaces (*doorknobs, keyboards, remote controls, desks, other work tools and equipment*) can be wiped down by employees before each use.
- For common areas used by all:
 - Establish staggered shifts for breaks or lunch.
 - Remove tables/chairs to allow for 6 feet of spacing for social distancing guidelines.
- If food is being provided, choose prepackaged/boxed meals with individually wrapped utensils and condiments (*no buffet-style meals*).
- Avoid multiuse coffee makers and ice machines, if possible, or provide wipes to clean them with.
- Provide wipes/hand sanitizer for using the department copier/printer.
- Always wash hands for 20 seconds in restrooms. Use paper towels to dry hands and on doorknobs; avoid air dryers.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: If an employee has tested positive for COVID-19, what recommendations do you have for his/her teammates?

A: As long as masks are worn by all team members, the risk of getting COVID-19 from someone positive is very low. This is why it's very important to make sure that during breaks/meals, when masks are removed, everyone is 6 feet apart from each other. However, if they had face-to-face contact less than six feet apart and without wearing a mask, we recommend those team members isolate for three days, take their temperature daily, and watch out for any symptoms. If no symptoms occur, they can return to work on the fourth day. If they're symptomatic, they need to seek medical attention through their primary care physician or BayCareAnywhere, or alternative telehealth.

Q: If an employee at work has symptoms, and is sent home sick, what type of cleaning should we do?

A: Deep clean all surfaces with a cleaning solution that contains bleach or 70 percent alcohol. Any utensils used by the sick employee should also be cleaned with an appropriate cleaning solution. The person cleaning the area should wear gloves and a mask.

Q: Should we have our team members tested before they return to work?

A: According to the CDC recommendations, asymptomatic team members shouldn't be tested unless they've been exposed. If an employer wants reassurance, we do offer COVID-19 testing at a minimal charge.

Q: If an employee is exposed to COVID-19, what are the recommendations for that employee?

A: Employee should do a telehealth or phone visit with their physician and follow his/her direction. We suggest that the team member monitor their symptoms including their temperature, a developing cough, shortness of breath, loss of taste or smell or gastrointestinal symptoms for 14 days. Employee should be symptom free for three days before returning to work.

Multiple COVID-19 testing locations are available in Hillsborough and Pinellas counties in coordination with the Florida Department of Health (FDOH). These locations may change frequently. Contact the BayCare Employer Solutions team for an up-to-date list of locations at (844) 420-8364 or [BayCareEmployerSolutions.org](https://www.baycareemployersolutions.org). If positive, the results are forwarded to the CDC for confirmation.

The FDOH encourages people who have lower respiratory symptoms and think that they've been exposed to COVID-19 through travel, or contact with someone who traveled, to contact the FDOH directly at (866) 779-6121 or covid-19@flhealth.gov. People who decide to seek medical care are asked to first call their primary care doctor or the facility so they can prepare for the patient's arrival. Learn more [here](#).

For the latest updates on COVID-19 case numbers in Florida, the U.S. and around the world:

- Florida Department of Health: [FloridaHealth.gov](https://www.floridahealth.gov)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [CDC.gov/Coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/Coronavirus)
- World Health Organization: [WHO.int](https://www.who.int)

BayCare Employer Solutions

BayCare Employer Solutions offers a variety of services for your company, ranging from low-touch to high-touch points. These services include:

- BayCare Urgent Care (*includes occupational medicine and workers' comp*)
- Mobile bus
- BayCare Physician Partner services
- HealthNav™ app
- BayCareAnywhere app
- BayCare Walk-In Care at select Publix pharmacies
- Fitness classes
- Biometric screenings
- Flu shots
- Health coaching
- Health-related seminars and classes
- CPR and basic life-support classes

Employer Solutions also provides the following services related to COVID-19:

- Temperature checks: BayCare can set up CDC-guided temperature screening stations or oversee on-site services to make sure proper procedures are followed.
- COVID-19 testing: BayCare has protocols in place to provide safe and reliable COVID-19 testing for your employees. PCR viral and antibody testing is also available.
- Redeployment of workforce
- On-site safe work consultations
- Return-to-work evaluations
- Proper PPE technique training

Visit [BayCare.org/Coronavirus](https://www.baycare.org/coronavirus) for more resources related to COVID-19.

About BayCare

A leading not-for-profit health care system in Tampa Bay, BayCare connects individuals and families to a wide range of services at 15 hospitals and hundreds of other convenient locations throughout the Tampa Bay and central Florida regions. Inpatient and outpatient services include acute care, primary care, imaging, laboratory, behavioral health, home care and wellness.

Humanity at Work[®]

The health care system often defines patients by their illness rather than their humanity, and takes far more interest in symptoms than feelings. But BayCare is trying to shake that definition of health care. We're creating a new health care model whose foundation rests on recognizing and respecting each patient's humanity, on displaying real compassion and real empathy, on meeting the needs of every community and every individual, and on providing quality care that's always available and easily accessible. Simply put, it's a new prescription for the future of health care.

Our Mission

Our mission is to improve the health of all we serve through community-owned health care services that set the standard for high-quality, compassionate care.

