COVID-19

Information for Businesses

The Anchorage Health Department (AHD) is offering this resource to **provide general information about the novel coronavirus (COVID-19)**, recommend strategies for employers to use to prevent workplace exposures to acute respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19, and to guide the management of employees who have recently returned to the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) from an area with known transmission of the COVID-19 or who have had a known exposure to a laboratory-confirmed case. This guidance is based on directives from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), who are charged with the management of the response to COVID-19 across the U.S.

Many businesses and employees within the MOA are concerned about the current outbreak of the 2019 novel coronavirus. The CDC is working hard to learn as much as possible about COVID-19 so that we can understand more about how it spreads and better characterize its associated illness. AHD continues to develop and update guidance and education materials in the face of evolving information.

> **Please visit our COVID-19 webpage for information and resources:**
> www.muni.org/COVID-19

To date, **there are no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Alaska**. At this time, novel coronavirus is not spreading within the community in Alaska. **The immediate health risk from COVID-19 for the public is considered low**. However, there is concern that local transmission may be starting in some locations within the United States, so we may well see COVID-19 in Alaska.

Because the risk of exposure to COVID-19 is increasing over time, the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) declared a public health emergency to allow local, state, and federal officials to fully coordinate responses in partnership with public health departments, emergency management teams, airports, health care professionals, and first responders.

COVID-19

Information for Businesses

Anchorage Health Department

What is 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19)?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses. Many of them infect animals, but some coronaviruses from animals can evolve (change) and infect humans, then spread from person-to-person. This is what happened with the current novel coronavirus known as COVID-19. Diseases from coronaviruses in people typically cause mild to moderate illness, like the common cold. Some, like the SARS or MERS viruses, cause serious infections like pneumonia.

What are common symptoms of COVID-19?

Information to date shows COVID-19 causes symptoms consistent with a respiratory illness, such as fever (>100.4°F), cough, and, in some, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing. Symptoms may appear in as few as 2 days or as long as 14 days after exposure. If a person develops any of these symptoms within 14 days of their travel from geographic regions where sustained community transmission has been identified or their last contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19, they should should first call the doctor's office or emergency room and tell them about their symptoms and recent travel.

> **Do not assume that someone is at risk for novel coronavirus infection based on their race, ethnicity or country of origin.**

How is novel coronavirus spread?

Like other respiratory illnesses, such as influenza, human coronaviruses most commonly spread to others from an infected person who has symptoms through:

- Respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes
- Close personal contact, such as caring for an infected person
- Touching an object or surface with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes before washing your hands

We learn more each day about how COVID-19 spreads and how long it takes for people to become sick. As information changes, we will keep you informed.

COVID-19

Information for Businesses

Anchorage Health Department

How is COVID-19 treated?

There is no specific treatment for illness caused by COVID-19. However, many of the symptoms can be treated. Treatment is based on the patient's condition. **There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19.** Be aware of scam products for sale that make false claims to prevent or treat this new infection.

Do business events need to be cancelled?

No. At this time, there is no need to cancel business or social events. However, the COVID-19 situation in the U.S. is rapidly evolving. It's possible that modifications of work and social interaction might be appropriate if we have local COVID-19 transmission in Anchorage. Remind and support employees that part of good health hygiene is staying home from business-related events and other social events when they are ill.

> **Currently, the risk of infection to the general public in the U.S. is extremely low and there are no restrictions on public gatherings. However, this rapidly evolving event deserves careful monitoring.**

Recommended strategies for employers to use now to prevent workplace exposures to acute respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19:

I. Support and actively encourage sick employees to stay home:

- Employees who have symptoms of acute respiratory illness are recommended to stay home and not come to work until they are free of fever for 24 hours without fever-reducing medication. Employees should notify their supervisor and stay home if they are sick.
- Ensure your sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance and that employees are aware of them.
- Talk with companies that provide your business with temporary employees about the importance of sick employees staying home and encourage them to develop non-punitive leave policies.

STAY HOME WHEN SICK

COVID-19

Information for Businesses

Anchorage Health Department

I. Support and actively encourage sick employees to stay home (cont'd):

- Do not require a healthcare provider's note for employees who are sick with acute respiratory illness to validate their illness or return to work, as healthcare provider offices may not be able to provide documentation in a timely way.
- Employers should maintain flexible policies that permit employees to stay home to care for a sick family member. Employers should be aware that more employees may need to stay at home to care for sick children or other sick family members than is usual.

II. Separate sick employees:

- It is recommended that employees who appear to have acute respiratory illness symptoms (i.e. cough, fever, shortness of breath) upon arrival to work or become sick during the day should be separated from other employees and be sent home immediately. Sick employees should cover their noses and mouths with a tissue when coughing or sneezing (or an elbow or shoulder), then immediately wash their hands or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

III. Emphasize use of respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene by employees:

- Place posters that encourage staying home when sick, cough and sneeze etiquette, and hand hygiene at the entrance to your workplace and other areas where they are likely to be seen.
- Provide tissues and no-touch disposal receptacles for use by employees.
- Encourage employees to:

WASH YOUR HANDS OFTEN

AVOID TOUCHING YOUR FACE

AVOID CONTACT WITH SICK PEOPLE

COVER COUGHS AND SNEEZES

Updated: March 2, 2020

COVID-19
Information for Businesses

III. Emphasize use of respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene (cont'd):

- Provide soap and water, alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol and alcohol-based hand rubs in the workplace. Ensure that adequate supplies are maintained. Place hand sanitizer and hand rubs in multiple locations or in conference rooms to encourage hand hygiene.

IV. Perform routine environmental cleaning and disinfection:

- Routinely clean and disinfect all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, countertops, and doorknobs. Use the cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas and follow the directions on the label.
- No additional disinfection is recommended at this time.
- Provide disposable disinfectant wipes so that commonly used surfaces (for example, doorknobs, keyboards, remote controls, desks) can be wiped down by employees before each use.

V. Advise employees before traveling to take certain steps:

- Check the CDC's Traveler's Health Notices at cdc.gov/travel and the CDC's Coronavirus Disease 2019 Information for Travel for the latest guidance and recommendations.
- Advise employees to check themselves for symptoms of acute respiratory illness before traveling and notify their supervisor and stay home if sick.
- Ensure employees who become sick while traveling or on temporary assignment understand that they should notify their supervisor and should promptly call a healthcare provider for advice if needed.
- If outside the U.S., sick employees should follow company policy for obtaining medical care or contact a healthcare provider or overseas medical assistance company to assist them with finding an appropriate healthcare provider. A U.S. consular officer can help locate healthcare services. However, U.S. embassies, consulates, and military facilities do not have the legal authority, capability, and resources to evacuate or medical care to private U.S. citizens overseas.

Source: L.A.County Public Health, Guidance for Businesses/Employers **Updated: March 2, 2020**