

Guidance for workplaces where a worker tests positive for COVID-19



Foreword

St John is a public emergency service organisation. In addition to being a statutory body with Royal Charter, St John is a provider of health services for business, industry and government. Our support to business and industry generates a small amount of income that helps us to fill gaps in government funding so that we can sustain the reliable and trusted public emergency services we provide in PNG.

We heard the cries of the business community for consistent, reliable and timely information. While it has taken a few weeks for us to develop this guidance, we trust that it answers most of the questions business leaders are asking the health leadership.

Our experience makes us well placed to help the business community understand the appropriate actions to take when a worker tests positive with COVID-19.

We developed this guidance for the business community in collaboration with the National Department of Health and the World Health Organization PNG.

We encourage you to share this with your colleagues and networks.

Matthew Cannon OStJ
Chief Executive Officer

Introduction

It can be confusing and stressful for employees and managers when someone in the workplace is needing treatment or is recovering from COVID-19. Transmission between workers in a workplace is certainly possible. However, steps can be taken to ensure the safety of all individuals is prioritised.

This document is a simple guide on what action to take if a worker is positive for COVID-19.

COVID-19 Hotline

1800 200



Executive Summary

Questions & answers for when someone in your workplace tests positive for COVID-19.

What should you do if someone in your workplace tests positive for COVID-19?

If a staff member or client receives a positive result while on your premises:

1. Ensure that the person is placed in a room separate from others
2. The Public Health Authority will already be aware and be preparing to transport the person from your premises to an isolation centre. However, feel free to contact the National COVID-19 Hotline on 1800 200 if you require information regarding the transport arrangements.

Be ready to assist the Public Health Authority with their investigation. This will help to limit transmission within your workplace. The Public Health Authority will identify 'close contacts' associated with your organisation. 'Close contacts' will need to self-quarantine. You can assist by starting to list:

3. Meetings the positive staff member may have attended in the last 14 days
4. The names of staff members the case regularly works with or sits with in close proximity
5. The names of staff members with whom the COVID-19 positive person regularly shares transport.

Who becomes a 'close contact' of the COVID-19 positive person?

A 'close contact' in the workplace setting means either:

- a) A person who had face-to-face contact with a COVID-19 patient within one metre and for more than 15 minutes,

- or;
- b) A person who had direct physical contact with a COVID-19 patient.
- or;
- c) Spending time in the same enclosed space without ventilation. For example, a meeting room, office or transport.

What is 'self-quarantine'?

Self-quarantine means that people need to stay at home. A person in quarantine cannot leave to attend public places, including work, school, childcare or university. Only people who usually live in the household should be in the home. Do not see visitors. You can leave self-quarantine only to get medical care or in an emergency.

How long do contacts need to self-quarantine?

Contacts need to self-quarantine for a maximum of 14 days from the time that you last had close contact.

What if a contact gets symptoms of COVID during the quarantine period?

Contacts need to:

1. Continue to quarantine
2. Call COVID-19 hotline 1800 200 if they develop symptoms
3. Get tested if you are instructed to by the quarantine monitoring team

Do contacts need to be tested because someone in the office has COVID?

The current government testing strategy is that ONLY contacts who have symptoms of COVID-19 should get tested. These symptoms are:

- > cough
- > fever
- > sore throat
- > shortness of breath
- > loss of smell or taste

In certain situations, people without symptoms may be directed to have testing. This direction will come from a Public Health official from the National or Provincial Health Authority.

Do we need to 'fumigate' the office?

No! Spraying, fogging or fumigating rooms to disinfect surfaces is not advised in the context of COVID-19 as this can increase the risk of transmission from surfaces to individuals.

Are temperature checks helpful?

Temperature checks might be helpful, but many people are infectious with COVID-19 before they get a fever. It might be more helpful to ask people if they have cough, sore throat or runny nose.

If you are choosing to check temperatures at points of entry to your workplace, it is important that those taking the measurements understand that normal body temperature is 36.5 – 37.4°C. Fever is a temperature above 37.5°C.

However, also note that a normal temperature does not guarantee that an individual does not have COVID-19. Many people with COVID-19 can present with normal temperature, especially at the beginning of their illness.

A high temperature can be caused by other factors, not just a virus. If someone has been exercising their temperature may read higher than 37.5°C. Their temperature should return to normal within a few minutes of resting in the shade. There is cause for concern if a person's temperature does not return normal when at rest. The person should have a medical assessment performed by a health worker.

Do contacts need to be swabbed at the end of their quarantine period, before returning to work?

This is not currently advised. Swabbing is only performed on people with symptoms of COVID-19 at this point in time.



How can we prevent COVID-19 transmission in the workplace?

COVID-19 is spread through saliva, respiratory secretions or secretion droplets from an infected person that contain SARS-CoV-2. These are released through coughs, sneezes, speaking or singing. After traveling about one meter in the air, the droplets tend to fall to the ground. However, within a one metre distance, the droplets can land in the mouths, noses or eyes of those who are nearby. Alternatively, droplets containing the virus can also land on surfaces and people can get infected when they touch the contaminated surface and then touch their face, nose or eyes. This is how the virus is passed from person to person in the workplace.

Further spread of the virus in the work environment can be prevented by applying the following rules:

1. **Stap long haus sapos yu sik (stay at home if you are sick).**

Help staff understand that the common cold or flu has similar symptoms as COVID-19. If they have any of these symptoms, they should not come to work and should consider being tested for COVID-19.

Ensure they understand you will continue to pay them, even if they don't have any sick leave. It is far better for business to pay employees to stay at home, than to have them come into the office (simply because they need the money) and then infect other staff/clients.

2. **Lusim wan mita speis long ol narapela taim yu stap long publik ples na ofis**

Ensure there is 1m distance between staff/clients. The 1 metre distance helps stop infected droplets from landing on people nearby.

- Ensure workstations and any seats are at least 1 metre apart
- Where there are clients waiting to be served, ensure that they are at least 1m apart from each other and also do not get within less than 1m of staff
- Avoid large meetings and if they can't be avoided, ensure that the meeting rooms are well ventilated and appropriate distance is kept between participants. For large meetings, keep a list of meeting participants for a month. This will help to identify people that were potentially infected should a participant be identified having been positive for COVID-19 at the time of the meeting.
- If transport is provided for staff/clients, consider decreasing the number of individuals per vehicle to ensure a 1m distance between passengers

3. **Cleanim wokples bilong yu (clean work areas)**

Support routine cleaning of the workplace to minimize contaminated surfaces in the workplace. Ensure that staff have paper towels, soap and water or

bleach solution readily available to regularly wipe down surfaces throughout the day. It is recommended that high touch surfaces (i.e. doors, cupboards, printers, handrails, shared computers) be disinfected regularly.

4. Karamapim nos na maus bilong yu taim yu go lo public ples (cover your nose and mouth in public areas)

Ensure that masks are worn by both staff and clients. Wearing a mask can limit droplets from one person from landing on another's mouth and nose, potentially preventing onward infection to other staff/clients.

5. Wasim han bilong yu (wash your hands)

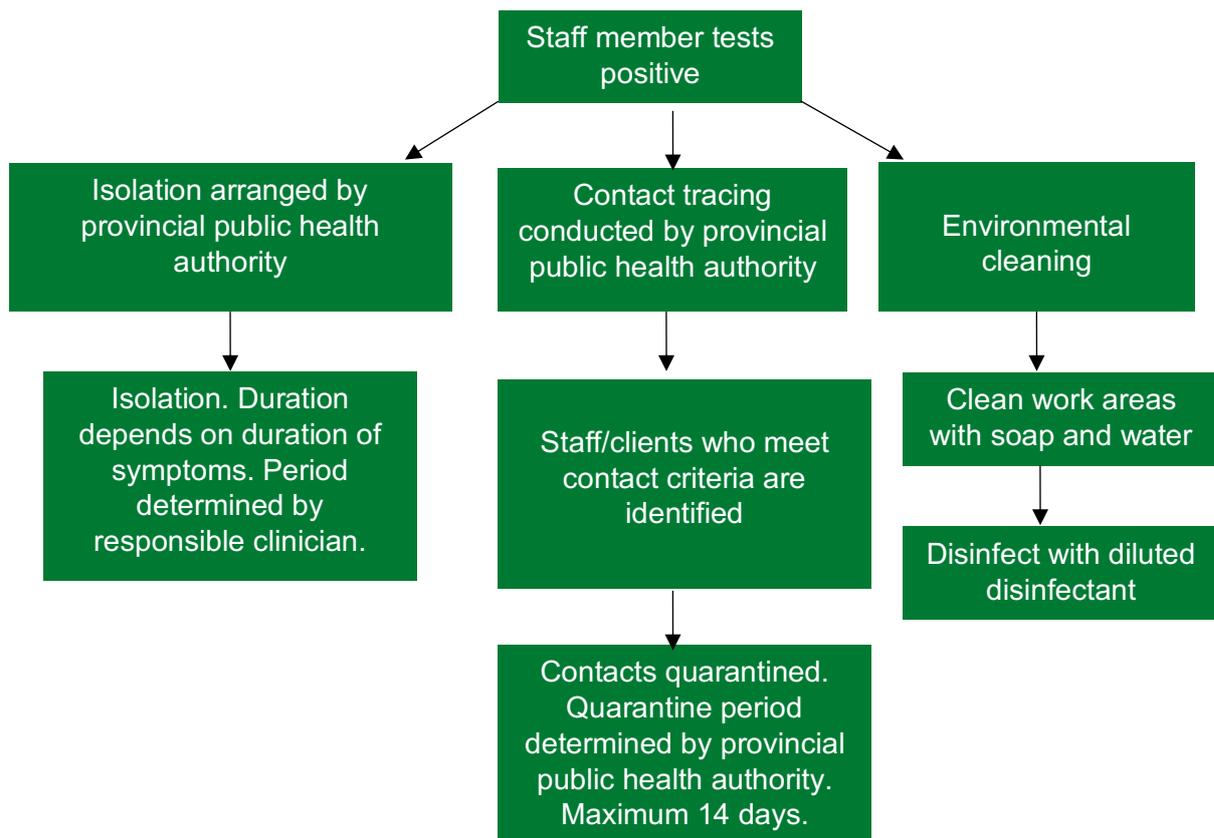
Soap and water and/or hand sanitiser should be readily available throughout the workplace to ensure staff/clients can wash their hands regularly. Ensure that staff are able to wash their hands on-arrival and leaving of the workplace, after using the toilet, before eating and throughout their working day. See Annex I on how to wash hands properly.



When someone in your workplace tests positive for COVID-19

Staff/clients that return a positive result for COVID-19 should be immediately isolated. This means that they should restrict all movement and be separated from the general public.

If a staff member receives their COVID-19 result while at work, place the person in a separate room/area, away from others until authorized healthcare workers arrive to transport them to an isolation facility. If the staff member receives their result while they are at home or elsewhere, they should not be expected to return to work and will be transported to the isolation facility.



When a staff member or client is identified as a positive COVID-19 case, the Public Health Authority conducts an investigation. This may include:

- Interviewing the case

- Investigating some of the places the case has been in in recent days, including the workplace
- An environmental assessment to help the workplace identify and prevent risk factors for further COVID-19 transmission
- Contact tracing. In the workplace, this means identifying staff or clients who were in close proximity of the positive case, and as a result are potentially infected.

Contact tracing

Contacts are those that meet criterion identifying those at highest risk of having been infected by a positive case. In the workplace, this could mean:

- Having face-to face contact (within one metre) of a COVID-19 case for 15 minutes or more
- Spending time in the same enclosed space without ventilation, for example a meeting room, office or transport.
- Direct physical contact with a COVID-19 case in the workplace

The public health authority will determine who meets the contact criteria.

Quarantine

When staff or clients are identified as contacts, they will be required to quarantine. Quarantine is the restriction of activities and separation of persons from the general public among those who are not ill but who may have been exposed to COVID-19. Quarantine means that people need to stay at home. A person in quarantine cannot leave to attend public places, including work, school, childcare or university. No visitors can enter the home and only people who usually live in the household should be in the home.

While in quarantine, contacts are monitored for symptoms. If COVID-19 related symptoms develop, the Public Health Authority will arrange for testing to be conducted. Symptomatic contacts can also call the National COVID-19 Hotline on 1800 200 or report symptoms to quarantine monitors. If contacts develop non-COVID-19 related illness or require medical or emergency attention, they can contact St John Ambulance on 111.

Contacts are required to quarantine for a maximum of 14 days. The quarantine period is calculated from the day the person last had contact with the positive COVID-19 patient.

Environmental cleaning

Clean all surfaces with soap and water, then disinfected before the area is used again. Cleaners should be appropriately equipped with gloves (plastic aprons and eye

protection when mixing disinfectants) and diluted disinfectant (such as sodium hypochlorite) to ensure that cleaning and disinfection can be undertaken safely. Further guidance on cleaning disinfection can be sought from the Infection Control team within each Provincial Health Authority following the identification of cases of COVID-19 within your workplace.



For more information about COVID-19 in PNG visit <http://www.covid19.info.gov.pg>

Developed by the National St John Council Papua New Guinea in collaboration with the National Department of Health and the World Health Organization Representative Office for Papua New Guinea.

Authorised 07 September 2020
Port Moresby

Staying COVID-19 Safe



St John

Niupela Pasin



✓ Clean your hands often

Wash with soap and water
or use an alcohol based sanitiser.



✓ Cough or sneeze into your bent elbow

Cough/sneeze into your bent elbow, not
your hands!



✓ Greet others with a nod or wave

DO NOT shake hands, fists or elbows,
and no high fives.



✓ Wear a face mask or covering

when in public or working within 1.5m of
another person. A face covering protects
yourself and others.

If you become sick with any of these symptoms:

sore throat, cough, fever, runny nose.

1. Stay home - keep away from other people
2. Call the COVID-19 hotline **1800 200**
3. Go for testing

St John - reliable, trusted care.

