

# Social distancing to make your workplace COVID-secure

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/social-distancing/index.htm>

## 1. Overview

Social distancing means keeping people apart to help reduce the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19). Where possible, you should keep people 2 m apart. If this is not possible, consider additional control measures.

You must ensure that workers and other people visiting your workplace understand and comply with the measures you put in place.

Social distancing should form part of your business's risk assessment and is one of the steps needed to make your workplace COVID-secure.

Some of the measures you can put in place to maintain social distancing include:

- using floor tape or paint to mark work areas
- providing signage to remind people to keep a 2 m distance
- having people working side-by-side rather than face-to-face
- limiting movement of people:
  - ❖ rotating between jobs and equipment
  - ❖ using lifts and work vehicles
  - ❖ in high-traffic areas like corridors, turnstiles and walkways
  - ❖ allow only essential trips within buildings and between sites

These web pages explain the control measures you can use for different work areas and activities and the additional measures you can use where social distancing is not possible.

## 2. Common areas

Common areas include break areas, bathrooms, toilets, meeting rooms and accommodation used by many people. The potential for spread of coronavirus is higher in these areas if proper controls are not in place.

Identify and review the common areas within your workplace including:

- restrooms
- kitchens and tea points
- changing facilities and showers
- lifts
- canteens
- reception areas

Also consider pinch points in your premises such as narrow corridors, staircases, doorways and storage areas.

You may need to put in place a combination of control measures to keep people safe.

### **General control measures**

Consider putting the following control measures in place for common areas:

- Limit the number of people at any one time using any areas that may become congested
- Use floor markings to maintain social distancing

- Try to maximise ventilation
- Make sure that your workforce is clear on the rules when using common areas
- Minimise contact between people using barriers or screens
- Display signs reminding people to socially distance, wash hands and not touch their faces
- Work with landlords and other tenants in multi-tenant sites or buildings to ensure consistency across areas such as receptions and staircases

### **Break areas**

Employers must make sure all workers, including those visiting your premises for work, have somewhere to rest and eat and should also provide facilities to heat food or water for hot drinks. Find out more about having the right workplace facilities.

Consider these control measures:

- Ensure that workers understand the need to maintain social distancing and good hand hygiene before entering any areas where food is consumed
- If workers need to leave the site at break times remind them to maintaining social distancing while off-site
- If canteens are used, consider if food, cutlery etc can be delivered to tables. Where canteens need to serve food reconfigure seating and tables to maintain spacing and reduce face-to-face interactions. Mark the floor in case furniture is accidentally moved
- Stagger or extend break times to limit the numbers of people using the facilities
- Create additional break areas where required such as in unused rooms. It may be possible to create outside break areas where it is safe to do so

### **Bathrooms, toilets and washbasins (welfare facilities)**

You have a legal duty to provide adequate toilet facilities that are easy and safe to access. These could be staff, visitor or customer facilities. This applies to any workers (including those not employed or contracted to you), and any visitors or customers, who enter your workplace. The legal responsibility to provide access to these facilities lies with whoever controls the premises.

Refusing access for any reason, including as an infection control measure, is against the law. It is vital that people can wash their hands regularly, so not allowing access to welfare facilities may increase the risk of COVID-19 spreading.

When completing your COVID-19 risk assessment, review the provisions you have to make sure they allow people (including visiting workers) to social distance, use the toilets and wash hands frequently. Consider whether you need to provide any additional washing facilities.

To protect people when using existing toilet facilities consider the following:

- Take some static facilities out of use where they are less than 2 m apart. If this includes toilet facilities such as urinals you should ensure that you still have a sufficient number of toilets in your workplace
- Put markings on floors to show people the right distances or to show people where to stand
- Put in place systems such as 'one in, one out' if it isn't possible to maintain social distancing

We have separate guidance on cleaning bathrooms, toilets and washbasins during the pandemic.

### **Meeting rooms**

Consider the following measures:

- Use remote working tools to avoid in-person meetings
- Only absolutely necessary participants should physically attend meetings and should social distance throughout
- Avoid sharing pens, documents and other objects
- Provide hand sanitiser in meeting rooms
- Hold meetings outdoors or in well-ventilated rooms whenever possible
- For areas where regular meetings take place, using floor markings to help people maintain social distancing

### **Accommodation**

Employers who provide accommodation for their workers should consider the following:

- Identify measures to keep workers safe while they are staying in accommodation and working, in your risk assessment
- Minimise numbers of people living in shared accommodation
- Treat each accommodation living unit (eg caravan) as a 'household'
- How you will ensure if one person in the 'household' shows symptoms that all will self-isolate in line with the guidance for households with possible coronavirus infection
- Workers should not live or stay in more than one 'household'
- Keep people who live in the same household together in the same work group
- Try not to mix households while they are working
- Try to keep each household socially distanced from other households
- Check workers' health before they start work each day
- If a worker develops symptoms of coronavirus while working they should return to their household. The individual, and anyone else highlighted by government guidance should then follow the government guidelines on isolation
- Provide fire safety precautions as normal

## **3. Workstations**

Workstations are areas where workers routinely or regularly work and can include:

- desks or tables in the workplace
- production or processing lines
- areas by machinery that workers need to operate
- desks within workers' homes if they are working at home
- vehicles

Consider the following:

- Look at how you can organise workstations to allow people to meet social distancing rules
- Review layouts and processes to allow people to work 2 m apart from each other where possible
- Use floor tape or paint to mark areas
- Manage occupancy levels
- Avoid any sharing of workstations, including hot desking where possible
- Limit the number of people having to share a workstation to the absolute minimum
- Where workstations must be shared, try to keep the same set of people using them

Where it's not possible to keep workstations 2 m apart, consider these additional control measures.

## **4. Arriving and leaving work**

Take precautions to limit the chances of anyone with coronavirus entering your premises, for example, display signs asking people not to enter your workplace if they have COVID symptoms.

Limit the number of people entering your workplace, or parts of your workplace, to avoid overcrowding. Think about if you can arrange partial working from home for some staff.

Where possible, introduce shift working to limit the number of people in the workplace at any one time. This may also reduce the burden on public transport if your employees use it to travel to work.

You could introduce suitable barriers or screens where people regularly interact, such as service desks or reception areas. If used, ensure they are cleaned and disinfected in line with your cleaning procedures.

Consider these other control measures for when people are arriving or leaving work:

- Stagger arrival and departure times to reduce crowding into and out of the workplace
- Provide additional parking or facilities such as bike racks to help people walk, run, or cycle to work where possible
- Provide more entry points to reduce congestion
- Provide more storage for workers for clothes and bags. Encourage storage of personal items and clothing in personal storage spaces, for example lockers during shifts
- Use markings and introduce one-way flow at entry and exit points
- Provide handwashing facilities at entry and exit points, or hand sanitiser where handwashing is not possible
- Where possible, avoid using touch-based security devices such as keypads. If you need to use them, make sure they're cleaned regularly

### **Deliveries**

Put in place procedures for dealing with deliveries and visitors. Allocate time slots for customers.

Put in place measures to keep delivery drivers safe, this includes allowing delivery drivers to use toilets and handwashing facilities.

## **5. Movement around buildings and worksites**

Use floor markings to mark out social distancing. Focus particularly on the most crowded areas, for example, where queues form, entry points to buildings, toilets and communal break areas. Additional control measures may be needed for areas at higher risk of overcrowding, such as common areas.

Use any unused spaces to allow people to spread out and comply with social distancing rules.

Reduce movement by discouraging non-essential trips within buildings and sites, for example, restricting access to some areas, encouraging use of radios or telephones or other electronic devices, where permitted, and cleaning them between use.

Consider these other control measures when people are moving around buildings or worksites:

- Restrict access between different areas of a building or site
- Reduce job and location rotation
- Introduce more one-way flow through buildings
- Reduce maximum occupancy for lifts. Provide hand sanitiser for the operation of lifts. Encourage use of stairs wherever possible
- Make sure that people with disabilities are able to access lifts
- Manage the use of high traffic common areas including corridors, lifts turnstiles and walkways
- Put in place measures to remind staff and visitors to follow social distancing

## **6. Where 2 m social distancing is not possible**

Consider these additional control measures where 2 m social distancing is not possible:

- Decide if the activity can be stopped
- Keep the number of people working who cannot social distance to a minimum
- Reduce the number of people in close proximity in the work area
- Limit the movement of people around the site. Consider if, workers stay in one place, or at one workstation when working
- Limit the amount of different equipment or surfaces that people need to touch
- Use screens between people to create a physical barrier. You should keep the screens clean
- Organise the space so that people are side-by-side or facing away from each other rather than face-to-face
- Mark the floor of areas such as lifts to show where people should stand and what direction they should face

### **Working in teams**

Assign workers to teams which then socially distance from other teams. Keep workers in the same teams as far as possible to limit social interaction. Keep teams as small as possible. If a team member becomes ill with symptoms of coronavirus, they and the rest of the team should follow the UK government guidance on self-isolation.

## **7. Using vehicles**

Decide if travel in vehicles is needed for the business to continue to operate and ensure those who are travelling are necessary for the work to be carried out.

Limit passengers in corporate vehicles such as work minibuses. This could include leaving seats empty.

Consider the following control measures:

- Decide if social distancing measures can be implemented in the vehicle
- Avoid multi-occupancy vehicles where safe to do so
- Where multi-occupancy vehicles are used, people should social distance where possible through suitable seating arrangements and where necessary, use of additional transport. Keep the journey as short as possible
- Where more than one person is travelling and they need an overnight stop, plan ahead to ensure there is suitable accommodation secured to ensure social distancing
- If people who need to travel in vehicles can be kept in the same teams
- If vehicle windows can be kept open
- Vehicles should not be shared between different users if possible
- Remind employees to travel alone to and from work where possible, either in their own transport, by walking, or cycle if it is safe to do so

Where it's not possible for people to social distance in a vehicle, consider additional measures such as:

- using physical screening, so long as this does not compromise safety, for example by reducing visibility
- sitting side-by-side not face-to-face
- using a fixed pairing system if people need to work in close proximity

**Cleaning vehicles** We have separate advice on cleaning vehicles during the pandemic.

## 8. Emergencies, security and other incidents

Review your incident, first aid and emergency procedures to ensure people can social distance as far as possible.

Consider the security implications of any changes you intend to make to your operations and practices in response to the coronavirus pandemic as any revisions may present new or altered security risks.

For organisations who carry out physical searches of people, consider how to ensure the safety of those conducting searches while maintaining security standards.

### **Cleaning, hygiene and handwashing to make your workplace COVID-secure**

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/cleaning/index.htm>

## 1. Overview

As an employer, you must protect people from harm. This includes taking reasonable steps to protect your workers and others from coronavirus (COVID-19).

Coronavirus can transfer from people to surfaces. It can be passed on to others who touch the same surfaces.

Keeping your workplace clean and frequent handwashing reduces the potential for coronavirus to spread and is a critical part of making and keeping your business 'COVID-secure'.

These webpages will show how you can organise your work and workplace, so hygiene is maintained, surfaces are clean and people are provided with the right facilities to control the risk from COVID.

There is separate advice on:  
use, manufacture and supply of hand sanitiser products and surface disinfectants  
disinfecting premises using fog, mist and vapour

## 2. Handwashing and using hand sanitiser

Use signs and posters to help your workers practice good handwashing technique and to remind them to cough/sneeze into an arm and avoid touching their faces.

Provide:

- handwashing facilities with running water, soap and paper towels
- hand sanitiser at locations in addition to washrooms, such as sanitising stations in shops
- hand sanitiser nearby for people getting in and out of vehicles or handling deliveries, if they are unable to wash their hands

Information on how to wash your hands is available from NHS.UK.

### **Additional handwashing facilities**

When completing your COVID-19 risk assessment, consider if you need to provide additional handwashing facilities so that people can wash their hands frequently.

Consider how often people should wash their hands, depending on where they work and how much contact they have with others.

This will also help you to decide if and where you need to provide additional washing facilities.

If you cannot provide additional handwashing facilities, you may need to provide hand sanitiser instead near to frequently used areas.

When you complete your risk assessment, think about:

- providing handwashing facilities at entry/exit points so people can wash their hands when they arrive and leave work – if this is not possible, provide hand sanitiser
- where to have extra handwashing facilities so people can wash their hands frequently
- making sure your handwashing facilities have running water, soap and paper towels or hand dryers
- identifying where extra hand sanitiser points are needed in addition to washing facilities

## **3. Cleaning the workplace**

You may need to increase how often and how thoroughly you normally clean your workplace, as well as cleaning surfaces that you do not normally clean.

If you are cleaning because of a known or suspected case of COVID-19 in your workplace you should follow the GOV.UK guidance.

Before you can decide what cleaning is suitable for your situation, you'll need to do a risk assessment to help you manage risk and decide how best to work safely and protect people during coronavirus.

Your risk assessment will help you to identify what your cleaning regime will look like, but there are some general things that you should consider.

### **Clean frequently**

- Keep surfaces clear so that cleaning can be carried out more effectively
- Areas should be regularly cleaned in line with your cleaning plan
- Set clear guidance for the use and cleaning of toilets, showers and changing facilities to make sure they are kept clean and social distancing is achieved as much as possible
- Clean work areas and equipment between uses
- Frequently clean and disinfect objects and surfaces that are touched regularly
- If equipment like tools or vehicles are shared, then clean them after each use

### **Identify frequently touched surfaces**

Doors, bannisters, buttons and anything that is frequently touched, especially if it's touched by lots of people, will need more regular cleaning than normal. Examples of frequently touched objects include:

- work surfaces like desks, platforms and workstations
- handles on doors, windows, rails, dispensers and water coolers
- common areas like toilets, reception, changing rooms, corridors and lifts
- vehicle handles, steering wheels, seat belts and internal surfaces
- control panels for machinery, control pads and switches
- computer keyboards, printers, touch screens, monitors and phones
- taps, kettles, water heaters, fridges, microwaves and cupboards
- shared equipment like tools, machines, vehicles, pallet trucks and delivery boxes
- post and goods coming in or being shipped out

Put in place measures to clean surfaces and objects after each use where possible, for example phones and conferencing facilities in a meeting room. If it's not practical to clean after each use, such as lift buttons that are used continuously throughout the day, make sure they are cleaned often.

Any adequate cleaning regime should involve deep and periodic cleaning.

Deep cleaning is a thorough clean of all frequently touched surfaces at least once a day.

Periodic cleaning is cleaning at different times throughout the day. It can include cleaning items immediately after use as well as cleaning surfaces on a regular basis throughout a single day.

### **Workstations**

Make sure that workstations are cleared at the end of the day or shift so that they can be properly cleaned. Ensure that all workstations are regularly cleaned in accordance with your cleaning plan.

### **Accommodation**

Employers who provide accommodation for their workers should make sure it is properly and regularly cleaned. Consider following cleaning regimes:

- to ensure accommodation units stay clean
- for shared communal areas
- cleaning regimes for toilets and showers

### **Reduce the need for cleaning**

Reducing people's contact with surfaces and objects is better than relying on cleaning once contact has taken place. Think about how you can change the way you work to:  
limit movement of people around your workplace as far as possible  
reduce people's need to touch surfaces or objects

Ways you could limit movement or reduce people's need to touch objects that you can consider include:

- allocating specific work areas or vehicles to specific people
- creating small groups that can work independently on tasks
- closing off spare workstations and putting away items that you don't need



- propping open doors to avoid the need to touch handles (excluding fire doors or other doors that must be kept closed)
- fitting automatic sensor operated doors or foot plates to doors so they can be opened with feet rather than hands
- issuing door hooks to workers so they don't have to touch handles
- reducing equipment available to reduce the amount that needs to be cleaned

Find out more about what you can do to work safely and protect people during coronavirus.

### **Cleaning products**

Your usual cleaning products should be effective. If you change your usual regime then check that products are suitable for the surface and environment. Clean cloths and other reusable cleaning products in soap and water after use.

Store cleaning products safely and always use them at the concentration as recommended by the manufacturer.

### **Disinfecting premises using fog, mist, vapour or ultraviolet (UV) systems**

Fog, mist, vapour or UV treatments may be suitable options to help control the spread of the virus, by cleaning and disinfecting a larger space or room.

## **4. Bathrooms, toilets and washbasins**

When completing your COVID-19 risk assessment, review the provisions you have in place to make sure they allow people (including visiting workers) to wash hands frequently. Consider whether you need to provide any additional washing facilities.

To protect people when using existing washing facilities, consider the following:

- Identify all surfaces that require additional cleaning in bathrooms and toilets
- Make sure you provide running water and soap to enable people to clean their hands properly
- Provide hand drying facilities – paper towels or hand dryers
- Empty bins frequently to safely dispose of waste. Where possible have open-topped bin or foot operated lids
- Use signs and posters to increase awareness of good handwashing technique
- Decide how and when handwashing facilities will be cleaned and when bins will be emptied
- Decide who will replenish soap, paper towels and hand sanitiser

Find out more

We have separate advice on social distancing in bathrooms, toilets and washing facilities.

## **5. Vehicle cleaning**

Ensure vehicles are cleaned regularly, particularly between different users. Clean commonly touched areas in vehicles including:

- handles (inside and out)
- steering wheel and starter button
- centre touchscreen and stereo
- handbrake and gearstick
- keys and key fob
- indicators and wiper stalks
- windows, mirrors and mirror switches, seat adjusters and any other controls

Ensure that people practice good hygiene before and after using the vehicle. Provide hand sanitiser where necessary.

## 6. Cleaning staff

Some organisations may decide to have full-time cleaning teams. Smaller organisations may need fewer cleaning staff. Other workers can also play a part. You should determine what is needed for your business based on your COVID risk assessment.

Provide cleaning staff with their usual personal protection equipment (PPE) for cleaning where this is necessary.

Cleaners should maintain social distancing while cleaning and wash their hands with soap and water when they finish work. You should provide hand sanitiser when washing facilities aren't close by.

Ensure cleaning staff receive good instructions and understand the importance of carrying out thorough cleaning properly.

### **Talk to your workers and provide information**

Talk to all your workers and encourage them to co-operate with cleaners. They can make sure that surfaces are left clear at the end of the day so that deep cleaning can be done more effectively. Papers or items left on surfaces might make cleaning less effective.

Keeping people informed about any changes to cleaning, and the reasons for it, reduces the chance of uncooperative staff. It may also reassure your workers that you are doing what you can to keep them safe.

You could use posters to inform people that regular cleaning will take place and that they should co-operate with cleaners.

Where you expect users to clean equipment after use as part of your cleaning regime, posters can help to remind people of their responsibilities.

## **Disinfecting premises using fog, mist, vapour or ultraviolet (UV) systems during the coronavirus pandemic**

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/disinfecting-premises-during-coronavirus-outbreak.htm>

### **Do not spray people with disinfectants**

Do not spray people with disinfectants (in a tunnel, cabinet, or chamber) under any circumstances. Spraying a person could be harmful and does not reduce the spread of the virus. This is because transmission is usually through droplets or contact.

Attempting to disinfect someone in a disinfection system or device has no impact on the spread of the virus because droplets are created when people talk, cough or sneeze.

Disinfectants used to control or kill harmful organisms like bacteria and viruses are biocides and must comply with the Biocidal Products Regulations.

The risk of COVID-19 transmission must be managed using control measures that have been proven to work including social distancing, frequent cleaning and regular hand washing. Any relaxation of these proven, effective control measures can increase the risk of viral transmission.

### **Only use products authorised in the UK**

Only the Health and Safety Executive can authorise biocides in the UK. Any statement that the biocide is endorsed by another regulatory body or organisation such as the World Health Organisation or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is not relevant and does not override UK Biocidal Products Regulation.

Sometimes companies advertise that the active ingredients and biocide used in these types of systems are completely non-toxic, environmentally friendly, harmless or natural, such claims are illegal. Even where products are not specifically labelled as hazardous, when applying such agents in fogs, or fine spray mists that may come into contact with the eyes and upper airways, there is evidence that in susceptible people (such as asthmatics) airway reactions can be provoked and there is no easy way to predict these reactions.

### **Choose the correct treatment**

If you choose to use fog, mist, vapour or UV treatments as a way of cleaning and disinfecting surfaces, discuss your requirements with your manufacturers/suppliers (this may include fumigators), to help you decide if a product/system meets your needs. The treatment you use will depend on:

- the size of the area to be treated, its shape and how easily it can be sealed off if delivering an airborne product
- whether there are hard or soft surfaces - soft furnishings may act as a 'sink' for the airborne chemicals and emit them for some time after treatment (it may be possible to remove items such as sofas before treatment)
- the type of business you have - some areas may be better suited to UV surface treatments than airborne chemicals or vice-versa

### **Fog, mist, vapour method**

If using the fog, mist, vapour method you will need to ensure the correct concentration of the active chemical is used, this means there is enough for it to work properly, but not so much as to leave a residue which may remain at unsafe levels for some time after treatment ends.

There are different types of source disinfectants that can be applied as a fog, mist or vapour treatment. Some are liquid disinfectants used to create a fog, mist or vapour, such as hydrogen peroxide, others are generated from gases, for example ozone from air. Seek advice on what is appropriate to the environment that requires treatment.

### **UV method**

An advantage of UV over disinfectants applied as a fog, mist or vapour is that no chemical residue is left behind.

Rooms with complex configurations/interior designs may not be suitable for UV treatments due to the limitations of shadowing effects, unless multiple systems can be deployed. Similarly, very small spaces, such as small sanitary areas, may not be suitable for treatment via UV carousel as they need to be a minimum distance from walls etc to be deployed safely. Some disinfectant technologies are scalable so are typically more flexible in this respect.

### **Avoid harm**

Disinfectants applied as a fog, mist or vapour may reach harmful levels during delivery and UV systems may cause eye/skin damage if people enter an area undergoing treatment.

Discuss with suppliers what safety features they can provide to prevent inadvertent access to a room during treatment. For example, safety sensors, simply locking rooms during treatment if feasible, or safety signage as part of a safe system of work.

The equipment used to deliver the disinfectant must comply with the relevant UK law on the design and supply of products which, for machines, is the Supply of Machinery (Safety) Regulations.

### **Do not disinfect large outdoor spaces**

In outdoor spaces, large-scale spraying or disinfecting in areas such as streets or open marketplaces for the COVID-19 virus or other pathogens is not recommended. Streets and pavements are not considered as routes of infection for COVID-19. Spraying disinfectants, even outdoors, can be dangerous to people's health and cause eye, respiratory or skin irritation or damage.

### **Supply and manufacture of disinfectants**

The disinfectant applied as a fog, mist or vapour treatment must comply with the Biocidal Products Regulations (BPR). This includes the generation of ozone or free radicals. Please note the use of UV to disinfect is not covered by the BPR.

Under BPR it is the disinfectant, or the chemical used to generate the disinfectant, added to the machine, that is the biocidal product. Please note that the machine itself is not covered by BPR.

Suppliers of fog, mist or vapour units/machines should ensure that any disinfectant products they supply or recommend using with the unit/machine comply with BPR.

There is separate guidance on the regulatory requirements for surface disinfectants manufactured and supplied during the pandemic, which applies to disinfectant products applied via fog, mist, vapour units and other machines.

Manufacturers of disinfectant products are responsible for ensuring that their products are suitably effective, including meeting any necessary testing standards. They are also responsible for providing information and instructions for the user on the product label.

### **The law on chemicals**

Ensure that you follow the manufacturer's instructions to ensure you are using the product safely and effectively.

Where units/machines are used in a workplace, under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (COSHH) employers must ensure substances which may be harmful to people's health from their work activities are identified and assessed; and processes are put in place to eliminate or control risks.

COSHH also requires employers to provide information, instruction and training for all their employees who use hazardous substances such as disinfectants in their work, including the appropriate precautions and actions employees must take to safeguard both themselves and others in the workplace.

### **Sealing off rooms**

Rooms treated by UV or disinfectants applied as fog, mist or vapour should be empty and sealed off to avoid risk of human exposure to the potentially harmful treatments.

Disinfectants may reach harmful levels during delivery and UV systems may cause eye/skin damage if people enter an area undergoing treatment. You may also consider safety sensors that can shut off UV systems if a room is inadvertently entered during treatment.

Rooms that are very difficult to seal may not be suitable for delivering airborne chemicals.