

World Health Organisation advise on how to manage Covid-19 risk when organizing meetings & events

This advice is an extract from the World Health Organisation (WHO) technical guidance on *Getting your workplace ready for COVID-19* (3 March 2020). Found here: https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/getting-workplace-ready-for-covid-19.pdf?sfvrsn=359a81e7_6

Why do employers and organizers need to think about COVID-19?

Organizers of meetings and events need to think about the potential risk from COVID-19 because:

- There is a risk that people attending your meeting or event might be unwittingly bringing the COVID-19 virus to the meeting. Others might be unknowingly exposed to COVID-19.
- While COVID-19 is a mild disease for most people, it can make some very ill. Around 1 in every 5 people who catch COVID-19 needs hospital treatment.

Key considerations to prevent or reduce COVID-19 risks

BEFORE the meeting or event

- Check the advice from the authorities in the community where you plan to hold the meeting or event. Follow their advice.
- Develop and agree a preparedness plan to prevent infection at your meeting or event.
 - Consider whether a face-to-face meeting or event is needed. Could it be replaced by a teleconference or online event?
 - Could the meeting or event be scaled down so that fewer people attend?
 - Ensure and verify information and communication channels in advance with key partners such as public health and health care authorities.
 - Pre-order sufficient supplies and materials, including tissues and hand sanitizer for all participants. Have surgical masks available to offer anyone who develops respiratory symptoms.
 - Actively monitor where COVID-19 is circulating. Advise participants in advance that if they have any symptoms or feel unwell, they should not attend.

- Make sure all organizers, participants, caterers and visitors at the event provide contact details: mobile telephone number, email and address where they are staying. State clearly that their details will be shared with local public health authorities if any participant becomes ill with a suspected infectious disease. If they will not agree to this they cannot attend the event or meeting.
- Develop and agree a response plan in case someone at the meeting becomes ill with symptoms of COVID-19 (dry cough, fever, malaise). This plan should include at least:
 - Identify a room or area where someone who is feeling unwell or has symptoms can be safely isolated
 - Have a plan for how they can be safely transferred from there to a health facility.
 - Know what to do if a meeting participant, staff member or service provider tests positive for COVID-19 during or just after the meeting
 - Agree the plan in advance with your partner healthcare provider or health department.

DURING the meeting or event

- Provide information or a briefing, preferably both orally and in writing, on COVID-19 and the measures that organizers are taking to make this event safe for participants.
 - Build trust. For example, as an icebreaker, practice ways to say hello without touching.
 - Encourage regular hand-washing or use of an alcohol rub by all participants at the meeting or event
 - Encourage participants to cover their face with the bend of their elbow or a tissue if they cough or sneeze. Supply tissues and closed bins to dispose of them in.
 - Provide contact details or a health hotline number that participants can call for advice or to give information.
- Display dispensers of alcohol-based hand rub prominently around the venue.
- If there is space, arrange seats so that participants are at least one meter apart.
- Open windows and doors whenever possible to make sure the venue is well ventilated.
- If anyone who starts to feel unwell, follow your preparedness plan or call your hotline.
 - Depending on the situation in your area, or recent travel of the participant, place the person in the isolation room. Offer the person a mask so they can get home safely, if appropriate, or to a designated assessment facility.
- Thank all participants for their cooperation with the provisions in place.

AFTER the meeting

1. Retain the names and contact details of all participants for at least one month. This will help public health authorities trace people who may have been exposed to COVID-19 if one or more participants become ill shortly after the event.
2. If someone at the meeting or event was isolated as a suspected COVID-19 case, the organizer should let all participants know this. They should be advised to monitor themselves for symptoms for 14 days and take their temperature twice a day.
3. If they develop even a mild cough or low-grade fever (i.e. a temperature of 37.3 C or more) they should stay at home and self-isolate. This means avoiding close contact (1 meter or nearer) with other people, including family members. They should also telephone their healthcare provider or the local public health department, giving them details of their recent travel and symptoms.
4. Thank all the participants for their cooperation with the provisions in place