|  |
| --- |
| Briefing note  |
| **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in the Workplace** |
| 20 May 2020 |

# Infection prevention and control

Infection prevention and control during COVID-19 is vital in every workplace. It is important to note that unless working in a health and care setting, most workplaces will not require additional PPE to what they would already use under normal circumstances. If an employee is experiencing [symptoms of COVID-19](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/check-if-you-have-coronavirus-symptoms/) they should stay home and self-isolate for 7 days. Employees may also [request a test](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-getting-tested) if they have COVID-19 symptoms.

[The Government guidance](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/5-steps-to-working-safely) advises that the main ways to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace are: (1) undertaking a risk assessment, (2) consistent and frequent cleaning and [hand washing,](https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/best-way-to-wash-your-hands/) (3) keeping a distance of 2 metres away from others as much as possible, (4) reducing transmission risk through practical adaptations of the workplace when a 2 metre distance is not possible, and (5) working from home if possible.

Before the use of any additional PPE is considered, these main methods of infection prevention and control should be used.

## **What PPE should be used in my workplace**

Guidance for working safely during COVID-19 has been developed for various sectors which covers topics such as thinking about risk, who should go to work, social distancing in work, managing customers/visitors, cleaning the workplace, PPE and face coverings, managing your workforce, handling goods, and where to find further guidance.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

These 8 guides cover a range of different types of work. Many businesses operate more than one type of workplace, such as an office, factory and fleet of vehicles. You may need to use more than one of these guides as you think through what you need to do to keep people safe. Further guidance will be published as more businesses are able to reopen.

There is different guidance for [educational and childcare settings](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-educational-and-childcare-settings-to-prepare-for-wider-opening-from-1-june-2020) and [public transport operators](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-transport-guidance-for-operators/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-transport-guidance-for-operators).

**Face Coverings**

There are some circumstances when wearing a face covering may be marginally beneficial as a precautionary measure. The evidence suggests that wearing a face covering does not protect you, but it may protect others if you are infected but have not yet developed symptoms. This is most relevant for short periods indoors in crowded areas. Employees should be supported to decide if they want to wear a face covering. If they decide to wear one they should be signposted to [appropriate guidance](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-to-wear-and-make-a-cloth-face-covering/how-to-wear-and-make-a-cloth-face-covering) on how to make and wear one.

**Worries about returning to work**

## It is understandable that employees may be worried or anxious about returning to work and often may think that PPE is the best way to protect themselves from COVID-19. Good planning and communication with employees about all the infection prevention and control measures in the workplace can help allay these worries. Additionally, all employees should be made aware of how and to whom to express concerns about workplace working conditions. The latest Government-backed advice and information on taking care of yourself and managing anxiety can be found at [www.cornwall.gov.uk/mentalhealth](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/mentalhealth), which provides a list of help and advice web sites.

Prepared by:

Dr Whitney Curry

Advanced Public Health Practitioner: Health Protection

Wellbeing & Public Health

22 May 2020