



In recent years we have seen the emergence of a number of viral infections (Ebola, SARS, Zika etc.) that represent a significant global risk. The COVID-19 virus highlights the importance of preventing the transmission of diseases in public spaces and non-health care facilities. It is the responsibility of all businesses to take reasonable steps to safeguard the health of their employees, clients and suppliers, while ensuring that business continues, uninterrupted.

We have compiled a simple guideline to help you understand how the virus is transmitted, the areas of risk and possible solutions that we can assist you with, to manage the risk and improve the overall cleanliness and hygiene of your facilities, while at the same time protecting employee health and improving absenteeism.

## Method of Transmission of COVID-19

The virus spreads between people who are in close contact with one another (within 1 meter) through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Due to the size of droplets, they will settle on most surfaces.

### **There are two main routes of transmission of COVID-19:**

**Respiratory Transmission:** Respiratory droplets are generated when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Any person who is in close contact with someone who has respiratory symptoms (e.g., sneezing, coughing, etc.) is at risk of being exposed to potentially infective respiratory droplets.

**Contact Transmission:** Droplets may also land on surfaces where the virus could remain viable and thus the immediate environment of an infected individual can serve as a source of transmission (known as contact transmission) to others in the same area. It is possible that a person can get infected with Coronavirus by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it, and then touching their own mouth, nose or eyes.

## How Long Does the Coronavirus survive on surfaces?

It has not been scientifically established how long the virus that causes COVID-19 survives on surfaces. Studies suggest that the coronaviruses may survive on surfaces for up to several days. Survival time depends on several factors including the type of surface, temperature, relative humidity, and specific virus strain. This review also found effective inactivation using disinfectants and sanitizers.

## What are the Symptoms of COVID-19?

COVID-19 can cause respiratory illness that ranges from mild to severe or even deadly. The symptoms usually start between 2 to 14 days after you get infected. The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, tiredness, and dry cough. Some patients may have aches and pains, nasal congestion, runny nose, sore throat or diarrhoea. These symptoms are usually mild and begin gradually. Some people become infected but don't develop any symptoms and don't feel unwell.

Most people (about 80%) recover from the disease without needing special treatment. Around 1 in every 6 people who gets COVID-19 becomes seriously ill and develop breathing difficulties. Older people, and those with underlying medical problems (heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes etc.) or who have compromised immune systems are more likely to develop serious illness.

# What are the possible risk factors in the workplace?



**High density / close contact areas**



**High frequency touch points and surfaces**



**Inadequate and / or infrequent cleaning of work surfaces and counters**



**General cleaning vs disinfecting and sanitizing**



**Cell phones and personal handheld electronic devices**



**Keyboards, computer mouse and handsets**



**Call centres – headphones with mouthpieces**



**Biometric system**



**External visitors coming into the building**



**Sick rooms and sick bays in offices, schools etc.**

# What are the control measures to manage the risk of contamination and infection?

There are several simple ways to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in your workplace and to safeguard your employees, clients, residents, students, pupils, visitors etc. Following on from the guidance provided by the global and local health authorities, we recommend that you increase the cleaning activities on site, and adopt more stringent measures, such as the following:

## **Make sure your workplaces are clean**

- Expand the cleaning scope to include disinfection and sanitizing of all high-frequency touch points, throughout the building.
- Include areas such as stair handrails, escalator handrails, lift buttons and control panels, meeting room tables, desks, pause areas, etc.
- Surfaces (e.g. desks, tables) and objects (e.g. telephones, keyboards) need to be wiped with disinfectant regularly.
- Disinfect and sanitize all biometric units and door handles frequently.

# Improve the Personal Hygiene in your workplace

- Provide employees with personal sanitizer wipe packs to wipe cell phones and personal handheld electronic devices.
- Place a sanitizer dispenser at all biometric points.
- Ensure that all dispensers are maintained in good working order and that optimum stock levels of all soap and sanitizer dispensers are maintained.
- Install hand sanitizer dispensers at strategic places throughout the building, including reception areas, meeting rooms etc.
- Provide boxed tissues throughout the building, shared office spaces, public spaces etc. along with closed bins for hygienically disposing of them.
- Provide boxed sanitizer dispensers and wipes in meeting rooms.

- Make sure that staff, contractors and customers have access to places where they can wash their hands with soap and water.
- Display posters promoting the importance of following the correct hand-washing technique.
- Continue to have regular communication sessions with all employees, emphasising the importance of personal hygiene, offering guidance from occupational health and safety officers as well as providing updates published by the local and national health authorities.

With the winter flu season almost upon us, these control measures will also be effective in preventing the spread of infections in your workplace and improve employee absentee levels.

# What we can do for you?

We currently provide a general cleaning scope in your facility; however, we would recommend that you expand the scope to include disinfection and sanitizing of all high-frequency touch points, throughout the building.

We have established a hotline to assist with any queries you may have regarding our cleaning and hygiene solutions.

Contact us on: [COVID-19@empactgroup.co.za](mailto:COVID-19@empactgroup.co.za)