

## Protect the People You Serve – Maintain Safety in Home after Work

Federal and state agencies have issued a great deal of guidance about such on-the-job matters as workplace exposure to COVID-19, when health care workers should return to work, and screening of workers to detect signs and symptoms of possible infection. Information about good hygienic practices for the general public also is plentiful. Not so common, however, are guidelines for health care personnel on how to minimize the greatest risk to the people they serve on the job: exposure to COVID-19 at home.

OHCA designed this guidance in an effort to fill that gap by sharing recommendations that are not as well-known.

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) is part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) within the Department of Health and Human Services. NIOSH is the federal agency responsible for conducting research and making recommendations to prevent work-related injuries and illnesses. NIOSH developed a “Protect Your Family: Reduce Contamination at Home” tool.<sup>1</sup>

### NIOSH recommends:

- Use proper safety practices to reduce exposure.
- Leave soiled clothes/shoes at work.
- Change clothes/shoes before leaving work.
- Store non-work clothes/shoes away from work clothes/shoes.
- Shower before leaving work if possible or immediately when returning home.
- Do not take unnecessary items home.
- Remove clothing/shoes before entering the home when able.
- Launder work clothes separately.
- Prevent family members from visiting the work area.

### Keeping the home safe - Encourage your family members to take these steps<sup>2</sup>

#### All households

- Clean hands at the door and regular intervals.
- Create habits and reminders to avoid touching their face and cover coughs and sneezes.
- Disinfect surfaces like doorknobs, tables, and handrails regularly.
- Increase ventilation by opening windows or adjusting the air conditioning.

#### Households with vulnerable seniors or those with significant underlying conditions

*Significant underlying conditions include heart, lung, kidney disease; diabetes; and conditions that suppress the immune system*

<sup>1</sup> NIOSH Protect Your Family: Reduce Contamination at Home, 1997, <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/97-125/pdfs/wkhmcn.pdf?id=10.26616/NIOSH PUB97125>

<sup>2</sup> CDC <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/workplace-school-and-home-guidance.pdf>

- Have healthy people in the household conduct themselves as if they were a significant risk to the person with underlying conditions. For example, wash hands frequently before interacting with the person, such as by feeding or caring for the person.
- If possible, provide a protected space for vulnerable household members, including a bathroom.
- Ensure all utensils and surfaces are cleaned regularly, sanitize frequently touched surfaces with disinfectants.

#### Households with sick family members

- Give sick members their own room and bathroom if possible, and keep the door closed.
- Have only one family member care for them.
- If at all possible, the HCP should not be the one caring for the sick person at home.
- If the HCP must provide the care, use a facemask and minimize close contact (within 6 feet).
- Consider providing additional protections or more intensive care for household members over 65 years old or with underlying conditions.

#### Households with health care personnel (HCP) that have had significant exposure to COVID-19 individuals

**HCP – Risk Categories** – the CDC classifies HCPs through a detailed exposure level chart based on the level of exposure.<sup>3</sup>

Depending on the HCP's level of risk - if it is medium or high, some HCPs, when able, reportedly are isolating themselves from their family entirely (staying in a different location).

HCPs with a medium and low risk, when able, are quarantining themselves from others in their homes.

- Changing clothing in the garage after work and showering immediately.
- Staying in a separate room, using a separate bathroom if available.
- Cleaning frequently touched surfaces regularly with disinfectants (EPA-registered disinfectants, examples<sup>4</sup>).

**Health Care Personnel** refers to all paid and unpaid persons serving in healthcare settings who have the potential for direct or indirect exposure to patients or infectious materials, including body substances; contaminated medical supplies, devices, and equipment; contaminated environmental surfaces; or contaminated air.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> CDC <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-risk-assesment-hcp.html#table1>

<sup>4</sup> American Chemistry Council's (ACC) Center for Biocide Chemistries (CBC), Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)—Fighting Products, March 25, 2020, <https://www.americanchemistry.com/Novel-Coronavirus-Fighting-Products-List.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> CDC <https://www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol/guidelines/healthcare-personnel/appendix/terminology.html>