Information for employers

People who have returned from a country or region that is at high or moderate risk for COVID-19 should monitor their health closely. If you develop symptoms including a fever and cough you should isolate yourself immediately and urgently seek medical attention. Go to www.health.gov.au/covid19-travellers for the list of at-risk countries.

People who think they may have been in close contact with a confirmed case of coronavirus, should also monitor their health and seek urgent medical attention.

This information sheet should be read in conjunction with the 'What you need to know' and 'Isolation guidance' information sheets found at www.health.gov.au/covid19-resources. Go to www.health.gov.au/covid19-travellers for the current list of higher risk countries.

Can staff go to work?

Specific requirements are in place for people who have returned from a country or region that is at high or moderate risk for COVID-19, or think may they have been in close contact with a confirmed case of coronavirus. Go to www.health.gov.au/covid19-travellers for the list of at-risk countries and isolation requirements.

Employees who are in isolation should alert their employer. Depending on the type of work, and provided the employee is well, they may want to discuss alternative arrangements such as working from home. See the 'Isolation guidance' information sheets at www.health.gov.au/covid19-resources

What should I tell my staff?

Employers should provide information and brief all employees and contract staff, including domestic and cleaning staff where applicable, on relevant information and procedures to prevent the spread of coronavirus. You should inform staff who meet the above criteria that they should remain isolated in their home. Employees should advise their employer if they develop symptoms during the isolation period, particularly if they have been in the workplace. Public health authorities may contact employers in the event an employee is confirmed to have coronavirus.

What precautions should I take when cleaning?

When cleaning, staff should minimise the risk of being infected with coronavirus by wearing gloves and using alcohol-based hand sanitiser before and after wearing gloves. If cleaning rooms or areas of the workplace where a person with a confirmed case of coronavirus or a person in isolation has frequented staff may wish to wear a surgical mask as an added precaution. If a confirmed case of coronavirus or a person in isolation is in a room that cleaning staff need to enter, they may ask them to put on a surgical mask if they have one available.

Can food and water spread coronavirus?

Some coronaviruses can potentially survive in the gastrointestinal tract however, food-borne spread is unlikely when food is properly cooked and prepared. With good food preparation and good hand hygiene, it is highly unlikely that you will become infected with coronavirus through food.

It is unknown at this time if the virus is able to survive in sewerage. Those who work closely with sewerage should take the same precautions as those outlined above for cleaners. Drinking water in Australia is high quality and is well treated. It is not anticipated that drinking water will be affected by coronavirus.

How can we help prevent the spread of coronavirus?

Practising good hand and sneeze/cough hygiene is the best defence against most viruses. You should:

- wash your hands frequently with soap and water, before and after eating, and after going to the toilet
- cover your cough and sneeze, dispose of tissues, and use alcohol-based hand sanitiser
- and if unwell, avoid contact with others (stay more than 1.5 metres from people).

More information

While coronavirus is of concern, it is important to remember that most people displaying symptoms such as fever, cough, sore throat or tiredness are likely suffering with a cold or other respiratory illness—not coronavirus.

For the latest advice, information and resources, go to www.health.gov.au

Call the National Coronavirus Health Information Line on 1800 020 080. It operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If you require translating or interpreting services, call 131 450.

The phone number of your state or territory public health agency is available at www.health.gov.au/state-territory-contacts

If you have concerns about your health, speak to your doctor.