

United Nations Medical Directors
Reducing And Mitigating the Risk of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19):
Recommendations for UN Personnel
2 March 2020

(Note: This document may be frequently updated and is valid from date above)

- The following occupational health recommendations are provided by the UN Medical Directors to all UN Organizations and apply to all UN personnel to reduce the risk of UN personnel acquiring COVID-19 or mitigating its impact.
- All duty stations need to take into account the local host country/authorities' guidance and regulations when implementing these recommendations.
- As this is a rapidly evolving outbreak, be sure to check <https://hr.un.org/page/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov> for the latest version.
- For any questions, contact the Division of Healthcare Management and Occupational Safety and Health (DHMOSH)'s Public Health team at <mailto:dos-dhmosh-public-health@un.org>

**UN Personnel
Risk
Categories**

**UN Medical Directors
Recommendations**

- | UN Personnel
Risk
Categories | UN Medical Directors
Recommendations |
|---|---|
| 1 All UN Personnel | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All UN personnel should have comprehensive awareness of COVID-19 prevention strategies including strict adherence to hand hygiene measures using alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR) or soap and water (if hands are visibly soiled), respiratory etiquette (covering coughs and sneezes with flexed elbow or tissue followed by discarding the tissue and performing hand hygiene), social distancing (min 3 ft/1 m) from ill persons (those with fever, cough), following proper food hygiene practices, and strictly staying home when ill. Detailed information is available at https://hr.un.org/page/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov • Regardless of location, all UN personnel should be aware of how they and their families can seek medical attention when it is needed. • Well individuals with no respiratory symptoms are NOT recommended to wear a medical mask (known as surgical or procedure mask). However, masks might be worn in some countries according to local cultural habits and/or due to local authorities' decisions. If masks are used, ensure best practices are followed on how to wear, remove, and dispose of them and on hand hygiene action after removal (https://www.who.int/publications-detail/advice-on-the-use-of-masks-in-the-community-during-home-care-and-in-healthcare-settings-in-the-context-of-the-novel-coronavirus-(2019-ncov)-outbreak) |
| 2 UN Personnel Caring For Household | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If UN personnel are providing care to sick family members at home they should wear a surgical mask when entering the patient's room. If they are providing direct care or handling stool, urine or waste from a COVID-19 |

**Member(s)
with COVID-19
at Home**

- patient, the individual should also wear gloves and an apron (if there is risk of splash).
(https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/331215/WHO-2019-nCov-IPCPPE_use-2020.1-eng.pdf)
- UN personnel who are household members should stay in a different room or, if not possible, maintain a minimum distance of 3 ft /1 m from the ill person.
 - Perform hand hygiene after any type of contact with patients or their immediate environment and when removing mask and gloves/apron (if used).
 - For more information, please see WHO guidance: [https://www.who.int/publications-detail/home-care-for-patients-with-suspected-novel-coronavirus-\(ncov\)-infection-presenting-with-mild-symptoms-and-management-of-contacts](https://www.who.int/publications-detail/home-care-for-patients-with-suspected-novel-coronavirus-(ncov)-infection-presenting-with-mild-symptoms-and-management-of-contacts)
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**3 UN Managers
Who Approve
Travel / UN
Personnel Who
Are Travelling
or Plan to
Travel to
Affected
Areas¹
Experiencing
Ongoing
Transmission of
COVID-19**

- WHO advises against the application of travel and trade restrictions to countries experiencing COVID-19 outbreaks. As an occupational health measure, **UN Medical Directors recommend that, for all official travel, UN managers and/or UN personnel should undertake a risk assessment to evaluate the criticality of the proposed travel balanced against the risks to the traveler for any travel to or meetings in affected areas¹ experiencing ongoing transmission of COVID-19.** This includes risks posed by both medical issues and evolving travel/border restrictions enacted by states parties.
 - Delay or avoid sending to affected areas¹ any UN personnel who may be at higher risk of serious illness (for example older age, diabetes, heart and lung disease). Consult with your health care provider and medical services in case of doubt.
 - Travelers should be provided contents of travel advisories issued from WHO and DHMOSH. See <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/travel-advice> and <https://hr.un.org/page/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov>
 - Avoid visiting live markets in areas currently experiencing cases of COVID-19; avoid direct unprotected contact with live animals and surfaces in contact with animals.
 - **If you must travel to an area/s reporting community transmission of COVID-19, pay attention to your health during your travel and after you leave:**
 - Ensure to receive your agency's travel clearance and to consult with a qualified healthcare provider before travel.
 - Do not travel if you are sick or have fever and cough.
 - Ensure adherence to hand hygiene and maintaining a minimum of 3 ft/1 m distance from people who are coughing and sneezing
 - Monitor your health for at least 14 days after your travel and review the below Risk Category 4 , prior to return.
 - Avoid the consumption of raw or undercooked animal products and always follow proper food hygiene practices.
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¹ For such "affected areas", please refer to WHO's latest COVID-19 situation report found at <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports/>

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- Seek medical care immediately if you begin to develop fever or respiratory symptoms such as shortness of breath or cough. Remember to share your previous travel history with your health care provider and make every effort to inform them by phone prior to visiting a medical facility.
 - **Keep up to date with local health advice before and during your travel**
 - For all travelers, please be aware that local authorities may begin to implement travel restrictions and health screening measures for travelers entering or exiting the country. Some countries may have their own furlough restrictions and might even have halted flights, which would make travel difficult.
 - All UN personnel should check with the destination countries' embassy, consulate, or Ministry of Health and keep up to date with local health advice before and during travel. You should also comply with any screening measures put in place by local authorities.
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4 UN Personnel Who Recently Returned From Affected Areas² Experiencing Ongoing Transmission of COVID-19

- **Comply with all host country's requirements** for returning travellers.
 - If you have just returned from an affected area², you should **self-monitor for symptoms for 14 days after travel**.
 - During that period, you should **immediately seek medical attention should you develop any signs and symptoms**, such as shortness of breath or cough. Remember to share your previous travel history with your health care provider and make every effort to inform them by phone prior to visiting a medical facility and wear a medical mask when you seek medical care.
 - You should **only return to work when you are well** and completely free of symptoms.
 - HR personnel and managers are encouraged to **exercise flexibility around remote working to support staff who are required to stay at home**.
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5 Close Contacts of COVID-19 Patients

- WHO defines "close contacts" as persons involved in the following activities (per [https://www.who.int/internal-publications-detail/considerations-for-quarantine-of-individuals-in-the-context-of-containment-for-coronavirus-disease-\(covid-19\)](https://www.who.int/internal-publications-detail/considerations-for-quarantine-of-individuals-in-the-context-of-containment-for-coronavirus-disease-(covid-19))):
 - Providing direct care without proper personal protective equipment (PPE) for **COVID-19 patients**;
 - Staying in the same close environment of a **COVID-19 patient** (including workplace, classroom, household, gatherings).
 - Traveling together in close proximity (1 m) with a **COVID-19 patient** in any kind of conveyance within a 14-day period after the onset of symptoms in the case under consideration.
- For the above contacts of lab-confirmed, WHO recommends that **such persons be quarantined for 14 days from the last time they were exposed to a COVID-19 patient**.
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² For such "affected areas", please refer to WHO's latest COVID-19 situation report found at <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports/>

6 All UN Health Care Workers

- **Provide all UN personnel with COVID-19 preventative information** to reduce their general risk of acquiring an acute respiratory infection.
- Within UN healthcare facilities, emphasize standard infection prevention and control practices in clinics and hospitals. Always **follow appropriate infection prevention and control measures routinely and consistently implement standard precautions** regardless of the patient's diagnosis. See [https://www.who.int/publications-detail/infection-prevention-and-control-during-health-care-when-novel-coronavirus-\(ncov\)-infection-is-suspected-20200125](https://www.who.int/publications-detail/infection-prevention-and-control-during-health-care-when-novel-coronavirus-(ncov)-infection-is-suspected-20200125) and https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/documents/health-topics/standard-precautions-in-health-care.pdf?sfvrsn=7c453df0_2%20%20http
- Become familiar with WHO, and DHMOSH **guidance for management of severe acute respiratory infection** (See [https://www.who.int/publications-detail/clinical-management-of-severe-acute-respiratory-infection-when-novel-coronavirus-\(ncov\)-infection-is-suspected](https://www.who.int/publications-detail/clinical-management-of-severe-acute-respiratory-infection-when-novel-coronavirus-(ncov)-infection-is-suspected)). Know how to administer supportive care to suspect/confirmed COVID-19 cases, especially complicated cases. Receive specialised training via WHO's free Open Course Online Training on the management of severe acute respiratory infection available at <https://openwho.org/courses/severe-acute-respiratory-infection>
- UN health facility in the duty station should **develop specific protocols to identify, triage, and manage suspect COVID-19 cases**, in coordination with local health authorities and local referral hospitals and in reference to DHMOSH guidance at https://hr.un.org/sites/hr.un.org/files/COVID-2019%20Suspect%20Case%20Guide%20DHMOSH-PH%2020200213_0.pdf Such plans should be rehearsed periodically.
- **Ensure that the necessary personal protective equipment (PPE) for healthcare workers** to manage cases of COVID-19 is available and accessible. For more information on the PPE type depending on activity and role, please see: https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/331215/WHO-2019-nCov-IPCPPE_use-2020.1-eng.pdf Table 1.
- The UN Medical Directors recommend that, **for all suspect COVID-19 cases, UN health care workers should adopt a conservative approach in, i.e. using N95 or FFP2 or equivalent, dependent on availability of negative pressure rooms and fit testing**. Please note that individuals must be properly fit-tested before use of N95 or equivalent.
- UN medical staff should review, familiarize, and be **trained to don and doff the PPE needed for management of COVID-19 cases**. For more information, see [https://www.who.int/publications-detail/infection-prevention-and-control-during-health-care-when-novel-coronavirus-\(ncov\)-infection-is-suspected-20200125](https://www.who.int/publications-detail/infection-prevention-and-control-during-health-care-when-novel-coronavirus-(ncov)-infection-is-suspected-20200125).
- Encourage all UN personnel to **receive the influenza vaccination**.

7 UN Personnel Involved in Environmental Cleaning

- Adhere to **WHO recommendations for cleaning/disinfection of environment and equipment**, including linens and utensils. For more info, see [https://www.who.int/publications-detail/infection-prevention-and-control-during-health-care-when-novel-coronavirus-\(ncov\)-infection-is-suspected](https://www.who.int/publications-detail/infection-prevention-and-control-during-health-care-when-novel-coronavirus-(ncov)-infection-is-suspected)
- PPE recommendations for those involved in cleaning is available at https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/331215/WHO-2019-nCov-IPCPPE_use-2020.1-eng.pdf Table 1

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8 All UN Administrators

- Utilize the **COVID-19 DHMOSH/UNMD Preparedness Checklist For All Duty Stations** (available at <https://hr.un.org/page/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov>) to evaluate the completeness of your internal plan.
 - Ensure all UN personnel have **comprehensive awareness of COVID-19 prevention strategies**. A standard presentation for staff is available at <https://hr.un.org/page/covid-19-information-un-healthcare-workers> and can be adapted for your organization/duty station's use.
 - Develop, update, and test **business continuity plans** that will allow for the performance of critical functions with reduced number of UN personnel or closure of the office.
 - In alignment with local health authorities, develop **workplace protocol for how to manage** any UN personnel who meets the WHO/local health authorities' definition of a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 case or their contacts. (For WHO case and contact definitions, see [https://www.who.int/publications-detail/global-surveillance-for-human-infection-with-novel-coronavirus-\(2019-ncov\)](https://www.who.int/publications-detail/global-surveillance-for-human-infection-with-novel-coronavirus-(2019-ncov))) Keep staff informed of these protocols.
 - For **administrative guidelines related to the management of staff** during this outbreak, see https://hr.un.org/sites/hr.un.org/files/Administrative%20Guidelines%20-%20Novel%20Coronavirus%20Final%20Version%201.0%2013%20February%202020_0.pdf
 - If your duty station has UN health care workers, ensure the **appropriate selection of PPE for UN healthcare workers is available** and accessible. See https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/331215/WHO-2019-nCov-IPCPPE_use-2020.1-eng.pdf Table 1.
 - Ensure **availability of a local counsellor for UN personnel** who need to speak to a counsellor due to stress or other psychosocial needs.
- Be familiar with **WHO's guide for preparing the workplace** (See <https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/getting-workplace-ready-for-covid-19.pdf>)
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