



MEETING GUIDELINES: COVID-2019

Guidance for organizers and participants holding meetings during the 2019/2020 coronavirus outbreak.

Last updated 14 Feb: For further advice contact the Occupational Safety and Health team of DHMOSH/DOS via osh@un.org.

BACKGROUND

Coronaviruses are a large family of respiratory viruses. Some cause less-severe disease, such as the common cold, and others more severe disease such Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). Whilst the current outbreak of Covid-19 is still being investigated, it appears to be moderately infectious and able to be passed from human to human, primarily by droplet spread, as for other respiratory viruses. Whilst many cases will be of a mild illness, a small percentage progress to more severe illness and pneumonia.

PREVENTION

1. Avoid being exposed to respiratory viruses:
 - Avoid close contact with people who are ill with fever, cough or respiratory symptoms.
 - Wash or sanitize your hands frequently – this is one of the most effective measures available
 - Note there is no need for well people in low risk environments to wear a mask
2. Avoid spreading respiratory viruses if you are unwell
 - Stay at home or in your accommodation if you become unwell, develop a fever or other respiratory symptoms. Seek medical care but first always call ahead to your healthcare provider.
 - Maintain your distance from others – at least 1 m / 3 feet;
 - Cover your mouth and nose with a disposable tissue when coughing or sneezing and use the nearest waste receptacle to dispose of the tissue after use. If you do not have a disposable tissue cough or sneeze into your elbow;
 - Wash or sanitize your hands frequently – after coughing, before preparing food or eating, after toilet use, after contact with ill persons, or during exposure to high traffic public areas.

HEALTHCARE FOR MEETING PARTICIPANTS

For Covid-19: Clinical staff of the HQ New York clinic have the appropriate protective equipment, procedures and training to manage suspect cases of Covid-19. They will assess any suspect case and can facilitate entry into the New York healthcare system for further testing and management where required.

For all other medical care: The clinic is open for walk in consultations 08h30 to 17h00 weekdays and provides first aid, emergency care and advice on seeking care from New York City healthcare providers. Contact - msdnurses@un.org; Clinic reception - 212-963-7080; After hours for emergencies contact 911.

SPECIFIC MEASURES FOR MEETINGS IN HQ NEW YORK

Organizers are strongly advised to provide this advice and general prevention measures to all participants prior to the meeting, and to give a safety brief covering these points at the beginning of the meeting.

Participants should work to ensure their and their colleagues health and wellbeing by not attending if unwell, following good infection prevention measures as listed above, and seeking care immediately if unwell.



FAQ'S FOR MEETINGS

I have an important role or presentation to make but am unwell. What should I do?

Do not attend the meeting as both the risk to others – and the perception of risk if you attend and are unwell – is high. Infection control only works when we all practice it diligently.

What is quarantine for Covid-19?

This really means 3 key things in practice

- Avoid contacts – stay in your accommodation and at least 1 m / 3 feet away from others.
- Minimize the spread of virus particles by covering coughs, cleaning surfaces and washing or sanitizing your hands regularly.
- Seeking care or advice by phone first – *before* seeing a healthcare provider in person

I notice some other participants are coughing and unwell. What should I do?

The first step is to keep your distance from those who are coughing or unwell.

If appropriate, encourage the person to avoid others and to seek advice from medical services or a healthcare provider.

If you know the ill person has been in a high risk location and believe there is a risk to participants, then contact the medical service on 212-963-7080 and ask for advice – we will conduct a risk assessment to determine the next steps.

Will there be hand sanitizer available?

Yes, as well as guidance on use.

I have a mask – should I wear it? Will the UN give me a mask to use?

There is no evidence that there is any benefit for well people in low risk environments to wear a mask. We discourage their use in the Headquarters, as it may suggest to others the wearer may be a source of infection. In line with guidelines from the UN Medical Directors and our current risk assessment, the medical service will not provide masks, gloves or similar items to well participants.

What about recent travel to high risk locations?

In general the host nation authorities will provide screening of participants who have been to high risk locations and institute appropriate quarantine measures if needed. If in any doubt, contact the medical service on 212-963-7080 for advice.

Is there other information available?

Yes. The information provided in this brief is enough to manage most concerns, however or further information we suggest you seek advice from reputable and up to date sources. We suggest you review the 'Travel Advice' and 'Protect Yourself' sections at the World Health Organizations website, which is constantly updated to reflect the most recent guidance.

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

Included with this brief are simple posters for your meeting on covering your cough and how to use hand sanitizer effectively.