Reduce the spread of respiratory infections

Viruses and Colds in the Workplace

Respiratory viruses like influenza and the common cold circulate regularly. They spread by coughing, sneezing, shaking hands with a sick person, or touching a contaminated surface and then touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.

Using safe work practices can help reduce the spread of respiratory viruses in the workplace:

- Stay home if you have a fever or cough.
- Avoid close contact with others if you are sick.
- Keep your hands away from your mouth, nose, and eyes.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a disposable tissue for every cough and sneeze.
- If you do not have a tissue available, cough and sneeze into your elbow.
- Throw used tissues in the garbage.
- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds after coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose. Use alcohol-based sanitizer if soap is not immediately available.
- Clean and disinfect any surfaces or objects you might have touched while sick.

Field Level Hazard and Risk Assessment

Questions to ask when assessing the workplace's risk for respiratory illnesses:

- Who might be exposed to respiratory viruses at the workplace, and how often?
- How closely do your employees work together?
- Do workers live on site or in staff housing?
- Has a sick worker recently travelled?
- Are handwashing or hand cleaning facilities available at the worksite?

Roles and Responsibilities

Employer:

- Ensure workers have access to a handwashing or hand cleaning station at the workplace, particularly in high-touch areas like door handles and communal work stations.
- Meet *Occupational Health and Safety Regulations* (*OHS Regulations*) requirements for personal washing facilities (Part 6, Section 76).
- Support supervisors in training your workers about handwashing.

Supervisor:

- Provide instruction and information about cough etiquette, handwashing and hand sanitizing.
- Educate staff on the importance of staying home when sick.
- Direct workers to reliable sources of information, such as:
  - www.hss.gov.nt.ca
  - www.canada.ca/en/public-health.html
  - www.who.int

Worker:

- Follow the safe work practices listed on this sheet.

Relevant Legislation

- *Safety Act* Section 4(1)(a) & (b)
- *OHS Regulations* - Part 6, Section 76 (1) & (2)

References:

- *https://www.hss.gov.nt.ca/en/services/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov*
- *https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/bh022-respiratory-viruses-and-the-workplace*

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Government of
Northwest Territories

Healthy Respiratory Practices

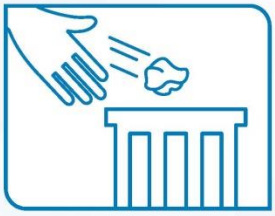
Stop the spread of infections that make you and others sick!

6 things you can do to protect yourself and those around you.

Stay home if you are sick
If you must go out wear a mask especially if you are in a waiting room or in large crowds.

If you are sick, avoid close contact with others

Turn & Cover
Turn and cover your nose and mouth for every cough or sneeze with a disposable tissue. If not available, cough or sneeze into your elbow.



Throw used tissues in the garbage
If no garbage, use small plastic bag to put used tissues until you can put them in a garbage.

Wash your hands
Wash your hands after coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose. Use alcohol based sanitizer if no soap immediately available.

Clean/Disinfect
In your home, clean/disinfect any surfaces or objects you or others might have touched while sick.