

# Essential workers: Safety at work and home

With most states mandating that people stay home to slow the spread of the coronavirus, workers who are deemed essential are increasingly stressed about their physical and mental health. If you or someone you care about is considered an essential worker, consider these tips to stay safe at work and home.

## AT WORK

### **Keep your distance from co-workers and the public**

Follow the CDC recommendation to practice social distancing and stay at least six feet apart. If you work in an environment where social distancing isn't possible, make sure that every time you touch something that another human being has touched (door handles, credit cards, money, etc.), you quickly disinfect your hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer. Consider wearing a mask if it helps you feel more protected.

### **Wash your hands frequently**

The CDC recommends washing hands with soap and water whenever possible to remove germs and chemicals from hands. If soap and water are not available, using a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol can help you avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others. Keep sanitizer at your workspace if permitted.

### **Keep personal items away from work areas**

Items like your phone, jacket, lunch or anything else you carry into work with you should be stored away from areas that other people access. Keeping items in a locker or your car reduces the likelihood of them becoming contaminated.

### **Do not work if you are unwell**

If you feel sick or experience symptoms of COVID-19, stay home and call your doctor. Do not go to work, school or the store. Avoid public areas. Do not use public transportation. Stay away from the public until you're told by your doctor it's safe.

### **Acknowledge your feelings**

Recognize that whatever you are feeling—worried, anxious, fearful, etc.—is natural. It's okay to feel that way, so give yourself time to process those feelings. Let go of what you can and be proud that your services are needed to help the community.

### **Cultivate a positive work environment**

Help yourself and your coworkers by keeping a smile on your face and sharing positive thoughts. Kudos, praise and recognition will help everyone during this time.

### **Communicate openly with your supervisor**

If you have concerns or fears about being in the workplace, discuss them with your supervisor. Likewise, if you have recommendations to make your site safer, improve morale, etc., share them.

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## **AT HOME**

### **Keep your car clean**

If you're driving to and from work, make sure to clean the steering wheel, climate controls, gear stick and door handles daily.

### **Decontaminate as soon as you get home**

Set up a private space to remove your clothing and put it into a hamper for cleaning. Leave your shoes outside, wash your hands and wipe down your phone. Consider showering immediately to further remove germs.

### **Do what you can to stay healthy**

Make sure you are staying hydrated, eating nutritious meals, getting exercise when you can and connecting with supportive loved ones.

### **Remember to rest**

Resting allows the body to recuperate from work and stress. Take some time to do nothing, watch a show or two, or take a walk. Give yourself a rest from thinking about work.

### **Monitor your health**

Monitor yourself for any symptoms of COVID-19 and take your temperature twice per day. If you have a fever or are not feeling well, call your doctor. Stay in touch with your mental health, too. Recognize the signs of burnout: anxiety, low mood, irritability, disengagement and exhaustion. When you feel this way, distract yourself with activities that increase your happiness and peace of mind like playing a game, reading a book or taking a short walk. If things are getting too much and you feel you can't cope, ask for help. Reach out to family, friends and/or local services for assistance.

Help is available. Your program is completely confidential and here to help you and your household members 24/7/365. No situation is too big or too small. Give us a call or visit your program website to get started.

*Nu, G. (2020, March 31). Why the CDC specifically asks you to stay 6 feet apart amid coronavirus pandemic. Retrieved April 1, 2020, from <https://www.clickorlando.com/news/local/2020/03/31/why-the-cdc-specifically-asks-you-to-stay-6-feet-apart-amid-coronavirus-pandemic/>*

*Show Me the Science – When & How to Use Hand Sanitizer in Community Settings. (2020, March 3). Retrieved April 1, 2020, from <https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/show-me-the-science-hand-sanitizer.html>*

*Harris, K., Harris, K., Harris, K., Marketing & Communications, & OSF HealthCare. (2020, April 2). Essential workers: How to protect yourself and your loved ones. Retrieved from <https://www.osfhealthcare.org/blog/essential-workers-how-to-protect-yourself-and-your-loved-ones/>*

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