



COVID-19 BUSINESS FACTSHEET



On February 11, 2020 the World Health Organization announced an official name for the disease that is causing the 2019 novel coronavirus outbreak, first identified in Wuhan China. The new name of this disease is coronavirus disease 2019, abbreviated as COVID-19. In COVID-19, 'CO' stands for 'corona,' 'VI' for 'virus,' and 'D' for disease. There are many types of human coronaviruses including some that commonly cause mild upper-respiratory tract illnesses. COVID-19 is a new disease, caused by a novel (or new) coronavirus that has not previously been seen in humans.

While we have confirmed cases in Montgomery County, the current risk is still low. Here is some information to help you and your business stay safe and prevent the spread of the disease.

HOW DOES THE COVID-19 VIRUS SPREAD?

Health officials are still learning the details on how this new virus spread. Other coronaviruses spread from an infected person to others through:

- The air by coughing and sneezing
- Close personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands
- Touching an object or surface with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose or eyes.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

People who have been diagnosed with the COVID-19 virus have reported symptoms that may appear in as few as two days or as many as 14 days after exposure to the virus. Those symptoms include fever, coughing, difficulty breathing, and pneumonia. More information can be found at the [Montgomery County Coronavirus](#) website.

GENERAL BEST PRACTICES

- Make hand sanitizer and tissues clearly available to employees and customers.
- Clean and disinfect your workplace on a regular, enhanced schedule and post a notice detailing your sanitation and hand hygiene procedures.
- Emphasize the importance of staying home if an employee becomes sick. Develop ways to support your employees so they can do so, especially if they don't have sufficient sick leave to cover the cost of staying home.
- Have a plan in place now to communicate with vendors, employees, insurance, and accounting services, with updated contact info in more than one location.
- Reach out to your janitorial service providers to discuss their health and hygiene procedures, the possibility of contracting them for additional services, such as a deep clean or decontamination, if needed.
- Do a complete inventory and talk with suppliers now about shortages they anticipate and plan or order accordingly.
- Contact your insurance company now to discuss what expenses may be covered, including liability and business interruption.
- Consider displaying flyers for employees and customers that outline good hygiene practices like handwashing, minimizing face touching, sneezing and coughing into a sleeve or tissue, etc. The CDC has a number of [free posters](#) available in various languages on their website.
- Be proactive with your customers/clients: explain the steps your business or organization is taking to maintain a safe environment.
- Be aware of the most common symptoms for COVID-19, which include a high fever, dry cough, and difficulty breathing.
- Develop and distribute a plan for how your facility will respond if someone becomes ill with symptoms of COVID-19 in the workplace.
- Remind your employees that it is illegal to turn someone away from your business or refuse service because of actual or perceived race or national origin. COVID-19 does not discriminate and neither should we.
- Have a plan for how you might conduct your business if you have a significant spike in employee absenteeism.
- Stay up to date with local COVID-19 news by signing up for [Alert Montgomery's Public Health & Environmental Alert](#).

For public health updates, businesses and employees are encouraged to sign up for Alert Montgomery's Public Health alerts at <https://alert.montgomerycountymd.gov>.

ADDRESSING CUSTOMER SERVICE CHALLENGES

Restaurants and Food Services

- Consider introducing delivery or curbside pick-up services if you don't already. Maintaining business if patrons stop visiting restaurants is essential. Design a delivery menu and set up your website now to accommodate delivery and online ordering. Even if you don't go live with that service immediately, be prepared to do so.
- If you already offer delivery, consider expanding your delivery zone and training staff to shift to food service delivery to minimize layoffs and ease the transition to a different model.

Professional Service, i.e. Accountants, Lawyers

- If it's possible for your staff to work from home, explore remote access to your servers and be sure to test it, perhaps by having a telecommuting day to work out any kinks in advance.
- Explore video conferencing and conference call services and apps and test them out so that you can meet remotely with staff and/or clients.
- Ensure you and your employees have the supplies they need to conduct business from home, remembering letterhead and envelopes, deposit slips, client and employee phone lists, call forwarding, chargers and tech needs. Encourage employees to set up a dedicated space in their homes, if possible.

Personal Services, i.e. Hair Stylists, Nail Salons

- Prepare a plan for an alternate business model if clients become fearful of public spaces. Consider offering in-home services, instead, and check with your insurer and licensing to ensure you comply with requirements.
- Consider revamping your cancellation policies to support customers who may cancel because they are sick.
- Reassure clients by preparing a statement about new cleaning and hygiene procedures and policies. Email it to your clients now and post on your website.
- Clarify policies about procedures and expectations around home visits with all employees.

Workplace FAQs

How do we prevent the spread of the virus?

- Keep your workplace clean and disinfect surfaces regularly. If you don't have a procedure and check list for regular cleaning, develop one and implement use immediately.
- Wipe down surfaces like counters, door handles, telephones, credit card pin pads, and keyboards regularly with disinfectant.
- Review good general hygiene practices with your staff, including coughing and sneezing into a tissue or sleeve, not a hand; minimizing face touching; and frequent handwashing and surface cleaning.
- Promote handwashing for employees by providing easy access to washrooms that are fully stocked with soap and clean towels.

- Make hand sanitizer and tissues clearly available for employees and customers in your place of business.
- Talk with your employees now about the importance of limiting physical contact like handshaking and encourage alternatives, like elbow taps or an old-fashioned smile.

What if a customer or employee feels harassed because of fear of infection?

- Remember that is illegal to turn someone away from your business or refuse service because of actual or perceived race or national origin. Call the county Office of Human Rights at 240-777-8450 with questions or concerns about discrimination.

- COVID-19 doesn't discriminate based on race or national origin, and neither should we. Transmission impacts people from all walks of life in our community.
- Remember that is illegal to turn someone away from your business or refuse service because of actual or perceived race or national origin. Call the county Office of Human Rights at 240-777-8450 with questions or concerns about discrimination.
- Treat people with respect and do not base their treatment in any way on race, ethnicity, or country of origin.

What if we learn an employee has a confirmed case of COVID-19?

- If an employee has a confirmed case the health Department will contact you to determine next steps.
- Prepare your business for the possibility of a short-term closure for disinfestation.
- If the employee suspects COVID-19 but it is not confirmed, consider doing a thorough cleaning, following the preliminary [CDC guidelines for cleaning and disinfecting](#).

For public health updates, businesses and employees are encouraged to sign up for Alert Montgomery's Public Health alerts at <https://alert.montgomerycountymd.gov>.