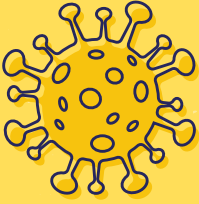




الاتحاد العربي للنقابات  
ARAB TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION



# OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK

during the COVID-19 Pandemic

#WorkSafe

[www.arabtradeunion.org](http://www.arabtradeunion.org)



**Occupational Health and Safety at Work  
during the COVID-19 Pandemic**

**Copyright © Arab Trade Union Confederation (ATUC)**

**First copy in English 2020**



As the Covid-19 pandemic persists, the risk of workers contracting the fast-spreading virus exacerbates. The pandemic threatens business premises and the flow of their activities, and warns of severe health effects and social and economic repercussions in addition to the burden it bears on workers and the challenge it imposes on work systems.

Therefore, occupational health and safety systems were among the main mechanisms to confront the threat of the pandemic, which should be achieved to limit the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic and to provide a reasonable balance between personal safety and commitment to work, whether in the workplace or during remote work from home.



Occupational health and safety measures also contribute to providing support for a safe and healthy return to the workplace after the quarantine period, self-isolation or the period of working from home.

This report also provides some guidelines that are aimed at preserving the health and safety of employers and workers in the workplace during the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as helping employers to create a safe and healthy work environment for all workers upon their

return to work after lifting the general measures to confront the pandemic.

It also presents some measures and recommendations that have been put into effect in the experiences of some countries during the response to the current health crisis, stressing that the health and safety of workers is a top priority in light of the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. There by, employers must maintain the safety of workers and workplaces as well as ensure that they are free from any risks in order to protect lives and ensure the sustainability of work.

## **How to protect yourself during the Covid-19 pandemic?**

**To control the spread of infection, you must stay at home with a physical distance of two meters from individuals that are outside your close circle of people. Also, wash hands, use protective masks, and learn basic information about Covid-19, infection symptoms and potential methods of treatment.**

### **\*Protecting workers from Covid-19**

Employers must take all precautionary measures to protect the health and safety of workers, including protecting workers from the risks posed by infectious diseases such as the Covid-19.



**\*Requirements that must be met in all workplaces according to the Occupational Health and Safety Law:**

The Occupational Health and Safety Law requires all employers to have the following arrangements:

- Ensure that workers are aware of the risks that they could be exposed to in the workplace by providing appropriate information, instructions and oversight on how to work safely
- Ensure that supervisors are aware of the required procedures to protect workers' health and safety in the workplace
- Establish health and safety policies and procedures in the workplace
- Ensure that all workers in the workplace adhere to the Occupational Health and Safety Law and all policies and procedures related to workplace health and safety.

Ensure that workers wear appropriate personal protective equipment and ensure that training is conducted on how to use this equipment

□ Take all the possible precautionary measures under these circumstances to protect workers from exposure to harm resulting from occupational accidents and work-related diseases. Through guidelines and advice on occupational health and safety law

The duties and responsibilities of employers and workers, and organizing roles in the field of occupational health and safety at work during the pandemic

Details are as follows:

### **Employers:**

Legally, the employer is the one who bears the first responsibility with regard to health and safety in the workplace, and he/she is responsible for taking all reasonable precautions in order to protect the worker. He/she is also responsible for spreading a strong culture of health and safety in the workplace that expresses respect for people in the workplace.



### **Supervisors in the workplace:**

Supervisors are responsible for communicating with workers and making them aware of the dangers they may face in the workplace, ensuring that they work safely.

They are also responsible for taking precautions against the risks that are brought to their attention, including taking all reasonable health and safety precautions in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic to protect workers.

### **Workers:**

Workers' occupational health and safety responsibilities include:

reporting workplace hazards, working safely and following safe work practices, using personal protective equipment that is required for the job they perform, and participating in developing workplace health and safety policy.

### **Health and Safety Specialists / Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committees**

The Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee, or its representative, as appropriate, contributes to managing the pandemic crisis by developing health and safety programs in the workplace by evaluating their effectiveness and feasibility and ensuring protection from the effects of response measures.

### **Workplace assessment**

Employers must conduct a workplace assessment process to determine the necessary measures to protect the health and safety of their workers.

Workers should work from home if possible, and the evaluation process is carried out in consultation between employers and the Health and Safety Committee if any or with a health and safety representative.

This evaluation supports the internal responsibility system in the workplace, which ensures that everyone in the workplace has a role in maintaining health and safety in the workplace, such as the employer, supervisors, workers, health and safety representatives or joint health and safety committees.

Under the Occupational Health and Safety Law, employers must provide their workers with the following:

- Information
- Instructions
- Supervision and oversight







**\*What should you do if you are concerned about exposure to Covid-19 in the workplace?**

Worker must be advised to stay at home if he/she has symptoms of a respiratory disease, and to make sure, the worker must contact the authorities concerned with providing the necessary medical care or the direct lines of communication of the Ministry of Health to receive the necessary instructions for his/her condition.

Worker could also resort to a search base providing resources and information on Covid-19, that is available to all users, on the Ministry of Health website.

This service is available to answer their questions and provide them with the necessary information such as guidance on the polymerase infiltration reaction test or the rapid test (PCR) that a patient can undergo to diagnose Covid-19 infection and how to perform it. Through it, the person whose results are positive could receive early care, and also those who were in contact with him/her can be traced.

Thanks to this, self-isolation and quarantine procedures can start faster and help stop the spread of the virus.

**Outputs of the evaluation process:**

In such a case, the employer must take all possible precautionary and preventive measures under these circumstances to protect the health and safety of workers. Employer must as well conduct a risk assessment to determine the parts of the work site in which the injured worker have operate and identify other workers who were in direct or indirect contact with the infected person, and requesting them to take their distance from the rest of workers.

### **Response:**

Based on the risk assessment process, the business owner may be required to:

- Send workers who had contact with the victim to their homes for a period of two weeks, and inform them to isolate themselves and monitor their health
- Employer could be asked to remain informed of any symptoms that are similar to the common symptoms of the Coronavirus when they appear.

Employer could be also required to close the workplace until it is completely cleared.

If the employer is informed that a worker suffers from an occupational disease due to Covid-19 and that this same worker was exposed to it in the workplace, the employer must inform the Ministry of Labor of this within four days.

The employer must also inform the following authorities:

- Committee on Health and Safety in the Workplace
- A health and safety representative
- Related unions

### **Some tips that contribute to maintaining health and safety in the workplace during the Covid-19 pandemic?**

#### **Personal protective measures to protect from infection:**

- Ensure the cleanliness of tools and surfaces that are frequently touched by workers and visitors during the working day, with the need to disinfect them regularly every day.
- Ensure that soap and water are provided in the toilets and hand sanitizers are distributed at the sinks and entrances to the toilets and placed in prominent places for workers and visitors.

- Ensure that workers and visitors adhere to putting on personal protective equipment such as masks and gloves, and train workers on how to use this equipment properly.
- Ensure good ventilation in workplaces, especially place of gathering and rest rooms, with the need to use natural ventilation.
- Assign a checkpoint at the entrances of companies or institutions to measure the temperature of workers and visitors and ask them about any respiratory symptoms such as coughing and shortness of breath.

Work organization measures:

- Schedule different times for the short rest period to avoid gatherings between workers.
- Maintaining a safe distance between workers, visitors, and the workers themselves, so that this distance is not less than two meters, by placing visible floor stickers to impose the spacing between them.
- Avoid crowding in stairs, narrow places and elevators.
- Holding the necessary meetings in outdoor open spaces with the least number of attendees and holding meetings that include large numbers through social media.
- Allow workers to work from home, if applicable.
- Allowing workers who suffer from illness to stay at home or work remotely if their health condition permits work.

Warning workers returning from abroad to isolate themselves for 14 days, monitor their symptoms and compare them with the common symptoms of Covid-19.

### **Self-protection in the workplace**

Employers are fully responsible for taking all possible preventive and precautionary measures to protect the health and safety of workers, including protecting them from exposure to infectious diseases in the workplace.

Concerned ministries, such as the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Labor, continue to provide new information and guidance on precautionary measures and preventive measures that employers must take to protect their workers, and the Occupational Health and Safety Law provides the necessary guidelines for the use of various types of personal protective equipment in places where workers are exposed to risks.

### **\*Use of personal protective equipment**

Workers must use or wear personal protective equipment that employers require them to.

Employers must also comply with any regulatory requirements related to personal protective equipment.



### **\*Concerns or worries about personal protective equipment**

If the worker is concerned about an issue related to personal protective equipment (such as masks, gloves, or any other special means), which is one of the occupational health and safety measures in the workplace, due to the lack of this equipment in the workplace or that it has defects that could expose him/her and other workers to risk factors, this worker must inform the supervisor or the employer of this matter.

Workers must as well inform the health committee concerned with occupational health and safety or the representative of health and safety in the workplace, if any similar problem arises.

Some cases in which the worker finds a threat to his health or safety may require the submission of a complaint related to occupational health and safety at the workplace if it is estimated that his workplace is unsafe or if he/she and other workers are in danger (such as the employer's refusal to stop the activity in the place where an infection was registered).

Also in cases where there is a failure to provide workers with necessary personal protection equipment and sterilization tools.

Workers must first communicate their concerns to supervisors at work or employers. They must as well consult a member of the Joint Health and Safety Committee or a health and safety representative, if there are any.

In case the employer does not respond to the concerned he/she have received in this regard and the defect has not been corrected, the worker can always be guided about the health and safety situation presented on the websites set by the Ministry of Labor. Such can also allow the worker to submit a complaint through the same site.

\*What should be done when a person at work has symptoms of respiratory disease?

The worker must stay at home and not go to work in the event that he/she has symptoms of a respiratory disease such as coughing or difficulty breathing. If a worker is concerned that his co-worker is suffering from symptoms of a respiratory disease, he/she must express his/her concern to the supervisor, the manager at work, or the employers, and the Occupational Health and Safety Committee or the workplace health and safety representative, if any, must be reported.

This would help the employer to ensure that the workers have taken all possible precautionary measures in light of these circumstances to protect themselves and to protect other workers.

The employer must take care of promoting a culture of hygiene and respect for the human being by ensuring that the hands are clean and etiquette are followed. Behavior when coughing and sneezing in the workplace.



**\*Some advice provided to workers to maintain health and safety in the workplace during the Covid-19 pandemic**

**At the level of personal behavior:**

Maintaining clean hands by washing them with soap and water or by rubbing them with disinfectants that contain alcohol.

Ensure the use of personal protective equipment in the workplace and outside

of it, such as medical masks

Dispose of the used muzzle immediately by throwing it in a closed trash bin

Use tissues to cover the mouth when coughing or sneezing, with the necessity to dispose of the tissues immediately in the trash and wash hands afterward

Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth

Avoid touching areas that are frequently touched by people such as public transportation

Wash clothes immediately upon returning home

Ensure constant ventilation of the place both at home or work

The obligation to stay at home when feeling sick, even if the symptoms are mild such as headache, cough or fever

**At the level of social behavior:**

Avoid contact with people who are infected or who suffer from symptoms of respiratory disease such as coughing and shortness of breath

Avoid crowded places

Do not shake hands

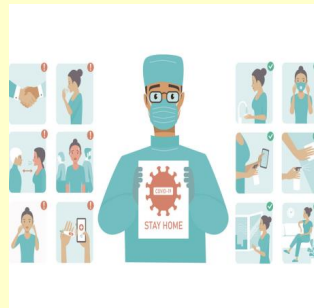
Maintaining social distancing, at a distance of not less than two meters

- Inform the employer and the concerned health authorities when feeling the common symptoms of this virus or when infected with it.
- Follow advice issued by national health authorities

**\*Work with someone who may have COVID-19**

All workers, including those working with infected patients or with people undergoing testing for Covid-19, should have the right to:

- Knowing the risks that they could face in their workplace and receiving appropriate training on how to protect themselves in light of these risks resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic



Helping identify health and safety problems in the workplace and participating in solving them

Rejecting unsafe working conditions

Employers have specific duties under the Occupational Health and Safety Law, including:

- Providing necessary equipment, materials and protection devices for workers and maintaining their periodic maintenance
- Provide the workers with appropriate information, instructions and control in order to maintain their safety and health
- Take all possible precautionary measures and preventive measures in light of the current circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic to protect workers and visitors



**\*The right to refuse to work when a breach of occupational safety and health rules is registered**

Workers have the right to refuse work that they believe is unsafe under the Occupational Health and Safety Law, and in the event that the worker refuses this unsafe work, he must immediately inform the employer or supervisor of these circumstances that affect his safety or health in his work.

Some professions have a limited right to refuse work if the risk in question is a natural part of the job, or if this refusal endangers the life, health, or safety of another person, in which case the right to refuse work is limited, and this includes people working in health care jobs and front-line workers in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic. Also, workers in services or correctional institutions and vital institutions of public interest, and these workers cannot refuse to work in the following cases:

That this dangerous circumstance is inherent in their work or is it a natural condition or part of their work

That this refusal be a reason that directly puts the life, health, or safety of other people at risk

With the need to emphasize that it is still the duty of the employer, supervisor or manager to take all necessary preventive measures to preserve the health and safety of all workers.

As for teachers, they are not entitled to refuse to work in cases where the life, health or safety of students is in imminent danger. The director of the educational institution shall take the necessary and possible measures to ensure the safety and health of the teacher in cases that prevent them from refusing to work.



If there is nothing that poses a threat to the students' lives, then the teacher has the right to refuse work according to the regulations in force in the occupational health and safety laws, and the refusal is submitted to the school council, the director of the school institution or representatives of occupational health and safety for consideration.

It is important that the following parties in the workplace are aware of the procedures that must be followed for refusing to work:

- Employer
- Supervisors or managers
- Workers' representatives
- workers
- Health and safety stakeholders
- Health and safety representatives

\*The supervisor or the employer must inspect the risk that causes refusal to work in the presence of the worker alongside one of the previously mentioned parties and take the initiative to avoid it until the worker returns to his/her work.

It is preferable to resolve disputes internally without resorting to external bodies if the risk is ignored after being assessed by the authorities responsible for occupational health and safety and the worker continues to refuse the work.

Investigation can then be requested from an inspector affiliated with the Ministry of Labor, and the worker stays in his/her workplace in a place enjoying more security and maintain his/her safety as much as possible until the completion of the ministerial investigation.

An employer is prohibited from taking any punitive or disciplinary action against a worker who refuses to work because of a risk resulting from the absence of occupational health and safety rules.

If the investigation ends with the approval of the danger that poses a danger to the life or safety of the workers, the employer should initiate measures to avoid it or stop the work as a whole or in part in order to

take other measures for occupational safety and health and to make them conform to the updated systems required for safe work on the health and safety of workers. Especially, in the circumstances of the pandemic disease force majeure.

### **\*Does Covid-19 affect the mental health of health sector workers?\***



The response to the Covid-19 pandemic for workers in public health services and in the field of health care has a great potential for exposure to stress during their work in a health emergency situation, so these workers need psychological support to prevent negative impacts on their physical, psychological and social health.

This is important in order to preserve their capabilities as front-line workers as part of a pandemic response.

Protection from the effects of distress requires professional advice and psychological support.

On the other hand, the work of those involved in occupational health and safety in health institutions requires ensuring that safety means: personal protection and equipment are in conformity with the standards recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) for each task according to the degree of its proximity and its dealings with people with Covid-19.

Also, to ensure that there is no shortage of safety materials health precautions are as much as striving to guide them to good practices in dealing with means of protection and personal protection when wearing them and when disposing of them so that they are not a source of infection getting spread. This would enhance the workers' sense of confidence and safety in the workplace.

In the event that there is a shortage of materials, they should avoid exposing them to surprises and give them clear directions for the safer ways to act in order to protect themselves.

In case of suspicion that they are infected with Covid-19 virus without symptoms or in the form of symptoms of the disease, workers in health care staff and medical services must adhere to quarantine and self-isolation at home.

### **Mental health during the isolation period:**

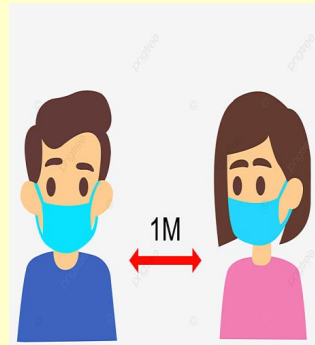
Taking care of mental health and maintaining mental balance is a challenge in the event that the worker is isolated at home during infection with Covid-19.

Also, coping with feelings of fear requires some time. Therefore, it is necessary to adapt to the changes in lifestyle and the appetite to challenge the state of weakness that may affect the isolated person.

In this regard, there are many directives that can be followed in order to take care of mental health and achieve self-well-being in this circumstance, such as:

Connecting through social media with people living in similar conditions and going through the same experience in order to support each other, draw resolve and help correct the wrong information circulating about the disease.

- Prepare for the next semester and do special work for it or make time to do the things you love.
- Take care of your fitness
- Do deep, healthy breathing exercises
- Take care of your food and drink more water



- Communicate with those close to you via phone and social media

Read reliable sources of information to guide you about the prevention and treatment of Covid-19

- If you feel depressed, follow motivational programs until you get out of that state of mind
- Set yourself realistic goals and plans to achieve them
- If feeling claustrophobic, open the window and see it

We offer you some advice and guidance on health and safety in the workplace in light of the Covid-19 pandemic by asking the most important questions and answering these questions:

**What is the mechanism by which the Covid-19 virus is transmitted?  
Can this virus be transmitted between workers in the workplace?**



Coronavirus can spread through contact with contaminated surfaces or through small droplets (respiratory tract droplets) that a person infected with Covid-19 from nose or mouth while coughing, sneezing or speaking, as these droplets can fall on surfaces or door handles surrounding the infected person.

These factors could lead to contamination with the virus and infecting other people when they touch these surfaces and then touch their eyes, nose, or mouth. Also, or by breathing in these droplets directly from the infected person, and therefore workers can be exposed to the virus when they go to the workplace and return from there, while traveling to work in an area witnessing an outbreak or community spread of this virus, and exposure to the virus may occur as well in the workplace itself.

## **What are the risks that could put workers at risk of contracting Covid-19 in the workplace?**

Workers may be exposed to the risk of infection with the Covid-19 virus in the workplace when they come into contact with surfaces and objects contaminated with this virus, or when approaching an infected person within a distance less than the safety distance of between one and two meters, or through physical contact with people infected with this virus.

## **How can workers plan preventive measures in their workplaces and how can they estimate the risks of exposure to Covid-19?**

Employers or managers should support the occupational health and safety advisor to conduct a rapid assessment and evaluation of the risks present in the workplace and in the various jobs to determine the possibility of worker exposure to risks with the aim of taking appropriate preventive measures to address these risks.

### **The severity of exposure is divided into three parts:**

#### **\*Low level of exposure to risk**

Exposure to a low level of risk includes jobs or businesses in which there is no frequent contact with the general public or other persons where contact with the general public or other workers in this category is very limited, and examples of these jobs are:

- Workers remotely functioning from home
- Office workers who do not have frequent close contact with others
- Workers who remotely provide assisted services, such as hotlines for health services

#### **\*Medium level of exposure to risk**

Exposure to a moderate level of risk includes jobs or tasks that have frequent contact or contact with the general public or other people, where this level of risk applies to:

Workers who come into frequent and close contact with people in work environments that contain high population density such as public transport, markets, restaurants, bus stations and other examples in which maintaining a safe distance does not achieve social distancing is possible.

Tasks that require close or close contact or contact with co-workers, such as front-line workers in the police and security apparatus, and in the field of necessary public services such as the water and sanitation sector, the construction sector, and the public transport sector.

**\*High level of exposure to risk**

Exposure to a high level of risk includes jobs or tasks that have frequent contact or contact with people at high risk of infection with Covid-19 virus, persons infected with this virus or persons who may be infected with it, or jobs that require contact with objects and surfaces that are likely to be contaminated with the virus, where this level of risks applies to:

Workers in transport means that transport people infected with Covid-19 or suspected of being infected without a shield between the driver of the vehicle and the passengers, or without taking the necessary preventive measures by the driver or passengers, such as wearing masks and protective masks or using the required alcohol disinfectants

Workers in services concerned with delivering essential items to people living with the virus

Providers of domestic services to people infected with Covid-19, such as domestic workers

People burying people with Covid-19 virus after their death

□ Workers in the maintenance sector who are required to maintain the places where the injured are found.

Frontline workers in the response to Covid-19, such as health and medical workers who care for the infected people and conduct Covid-19 testing for them.



**\*Who should conduct the workplace risk assessment?**

The risk assessment process for exposure to Covid-19 in the workplace should be conducted and regularly updated by employers and managers or supervisors in consultation with workers and with the

support of occupational health and safety services in the workplace.

**\*What are the main considerations in the workplace risk assessment process?**

The risk assessment process must take into account the surrounding environment, the required task, the risk and the available resources, including personal protective equipment and the possibility of taking preventive measures, and this process must also include the collective accommodation provided by the employer for his workers, and it must also take into account the groups that are most exposed to occupational risks that threaten the occupational health and safety for workers in basic public services such as public transportation, security, police and other frontline workers in the response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

As for the workers at greatest risk of contracting Covid-19 who are elderly, those with chronic health conditions, or pregnant women, an

individual risk assessment process must be conducted for each of these cases.

**\*How can employers make decisions related to the workplace in terms of when they must open or close workplaces in light of this pandemic, and if workplaces are already closed, then the question here is how to make decisions related to reopening workplaces, suspending or cutting back on work activities?**

Decisions related to the workplace should be based on the risk assessment process and the ability of employers to take preventive measures and the extent to which workers adhere to these measures, in addition to their reliance on the recommendations of the relevant national authorities.

Therefore, the decision to close or reopen the workplace, or suspend or reduce work activities mainly depends on these things.

**\*What are the preventive measures that must be taken in the workplace in light of a Covid-19 outbreak?**

Measures to limit the spread of Covid-19 in the workplace include:

Promote and encourage the maintenance of hand hygiene, by washing them with soap and water and using alcohol disinfectants

Putting hand sterilizing tools in prominent places in the workplace

Regularly sterilize offices and tools used by workers

Maintaining social distancing with a safety distance of no less than two meters

Use of gloves and napkins when using door handles and elevator buttons, with the need to change gloves constantly and dispose of them



when finished using them in the trash and make sure not to touch the nose or mouth when using them for long periods

Adherence to the national recommendations issued by the competent medical authorities

Wearing masks and medical masks.

To limit, as much as possible, work-related travel to places with a community spread of the virus

Educating managers and workers to increase their awareness of Covid-19 and providing training for the use of personal protective equipment

Asking people who are infected or suspected of being infected to stay home, self-isolate and work from home if their health conditions permit

Advising workers infected with the virus to inform the concerned authorities to seek the necessary medical assistance and advice

Use the shift system to divide employees and organize work in order to reduce communication between employees

Encouraging respiratory hygiene, such as covering the mouth when coughing or sneezing

Establish policies and procedures to respond to this pandemic

**Additional measures for workplaces and jobs with moderate exposure include:**

Clean and disinfect surfaces and things that are touched frequently by workers, and organize floors and bathrooms regularly and more than twice a day.

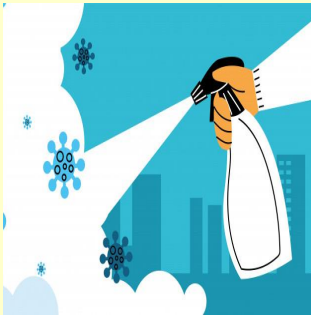
Suspending businesses and activities in which it is not possible to achieve social distancing

Promote regular hand cleaning

Provide good ventilation in the workplace and rely on natural ventilation

- Require workers to wear masks, goggles, gloves and protective clothing when cleaning the workplace, because the cleaning process results in air transported that can lead to infection and spreading it
- Provide necessary training on the use of personal protective equipment for all workers

Providing laundries inside the workplace so that workers do not take their clothes that may be contaminated with the virus home.



**Additional measures for workplaces and jobs with a high level of risk include:**

- assess the possibility of suspending work
- Promote hand hygiene regularly
- Providing personal protective equipment such as gloves, masks and eye shields for workers in homes of people

infected with Covid-19 virus and for frontline workers in dealing with this epidemic and training them on how to properly use this equipment

- Excluding the groups most vulnerable to infection with this virus and other groups that suffer from chronic medical conditions, pregnant women and the elderly from tasks or jobs that involve a high level of risk.

**\*What are the matters that must be taken into consideration when determining the necessary distance for social distancing in the workplace?**



World Health Organization (WHO) recommends adhering to a distance of not less than one meter between people in all environments and providing an area of not less than 10 square meters for each worker.

Some national recommendations regarding social distancing in some countries or health organizations require providing a distance greater than 1 meter so that the limit ranges the minimum distance is between one and two meters, because infection can be transmitted in crowded places, the goal of this distance is to prevent the spread of the virus or reduce it to a minimum, so people should comply with these measures aimed at preventing the Covid-19 virus, and this includes:

- Apply guidelines related to physical distancing in a practical and implementable manner in the context of work tasks so that they are accepted by employers and employees
- Addressing the implementation of flexible work arrangements, such as working remotely or working from home

Motivating workers to comply with social distancing measures inside and outside the workplace

- Conduct risk assessments and consultations between workers and employers to put in place social distancing measures in the workplace and take the necessary measures to implement them
- Approving the requirements for assessing the risks that may lead to a change in the common places of work and the change of previous transport vehicles.

Adopting the system of shifts or shifts and dividing workers into different groups to reduce mixing in the workplace

- Pair public health measures such as respiratory hygiene, hand hygiene and wearing masks with social distancing measures to limit the spread of Covid-19 virus as much as possible
- Consider the possibility of suspending work if social distancing is not possible in some work or tasks, and if it is not possible to suspend work, additional preventive measures should be taken such as barriers, masks, maintenance of hand hygiene, disinfection of the workplace and appropriate ventilation. .



**\*What are the rights, duties, and responsibilities of employers in light of the Covid-19 pandemic?**

Employers and workers should cooperate with the various health sectors to prevent and respond to the Covid-19 virus

- Developing a plan of cooperation between employees and their representatives and the administration, and consulting among them to put in place preventive measures related to the workplace

- Respecting international labor standards related to the rights of workers and employers and their respective responsibilities in the field of occupational health and safety
- Planning measures to prevent Covid-19 infections in the workplace by providing personal protective equipment with several other controls without workers incurring any expenses in purchasing this equipment

Adherence to the recommendations of occupational health services and take special measures for the groups most vulnerable to infection with Covid-19, such as the elderly, groups suffering from illnesses or chronic diseases, or pregnant women

- Inclusion of workers in the informal economy, digital work platforms, domestic workers, and migrant workers in measures to protect health and safety in the workplace
- Provide workers with clear advice on the measures that they should take if they become symptomatic

Eliminate discrimination in accessing information and protection from Covid-19 or in obtaining health, psychological and social care services

Compensation for workers in accordance with international labor standards and national programs who have contracted the Covid-19 virus through exposure to it in the workplace and considering it as an occupational disease

### **What are the rights, duties and responsibilities of workers in light of the Covid-19 pandemic?**

- Workers should follow the measures issued related to occupational health and safety, as well as measures aimed at addressing and preventing Covid-19 virus in the workplace.

Workers should participate in the training provided by the employer, including training related to health and occupational safety and training related to the response to the Covid-19 pandemic

- Workers should inform their employers or managers of any situation that may pose a great danger to their lives and health
- Workers should take care of the health and safety of other workers in the workplace as well as their own health and safety.

Workers have the right to refuse work or work conditions that they believe constitute an imminent and extreme danger to their lives or health, and they are required to have reasonable justifications

Workers are entitled to protection from any consequences or abusive practices resulting from their refusal to work



**\*How can workplaces plan to prevent workers from getting infected with Covid-19 and mitigate its risks?**

Business continuity plans should be developed based on the results of risk assessments and according to the epidemiological situation in the region in which the workplace is located, so that these plans include prevention and mitigation of Covid-19, these plans should be updated continuously and regularly when there is an infected person.

With a focus on the necessity of the participation of workers and their representatives in the processes of developing measures to address Coronavirus at the workplace, the effectiveness of the measures taken and the compliance of workers and visitors with them must be monitored.

**\*Will returning to the workplace be possible after the general measures resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic are lifted?**

There should be a clear plan to return to the workplace and this plan must have been carefully studied, and all potential risks to health and safety such as the need for machinery or equipment for maintenance after the closure period must be evaluated according to the risk assessment for the various jobs and tasks, and the return to the workplace is gradual and in small numbers sufficient to sustain the economic activity of institutions and companies, with great caution and not in a hurry to return to work. Indeed, haste to return to work without taking precautionary measures and personal protection measures resulting from the risk assessment process may weaken efforts aimed at restoring social and activity in light of this pandemic.

## **Is a temperature test recommended for people entering the workplace, whether workers or visitors?**



This examination may not be useful in all cases of detection of people with Covid-19, because infected people may not show a fever at an early stage of infection or disease, or people may resort to taking drugs that lower the temperature because of their anxiety of the possible consequences of not going to work. Therefore, these people will be a source of infection, so that the disease may be in the incubation period or the person did not show all symptoms when taking their temperature, and therefore it is not possible to rely on this examination to stop the spread of Covid-19 in the workplace. However, this examination can be considered one of the preventive measures to address the Covid-19 virus in the workplace, and therefore employers or managers should encourage their workers to monitor their own health.

Employers should also adopt a flexible policy to work remotely or to work from home when workers are infected with the virus and give them the right to their sick leave, because workers are not worried about the penalties that could be imposed on them for not going to the workplace.

### **\*Is it advisable for workers to wear masks in the workplace?**

Masks, medical masks and personal protective equipment should be provided to those with jobs and tasks that involve a high or medium level of risk and for people who suffer from chronic diseases, the elderly and pregnant women. It is also recommended to use masks made of fabric or face cover by people who are not infected and in places where it is difficult to maintain social distancing, so that the main function of masks is to limit the transmission of the virus from one person to another, and all target groups and those most vulnerable to infection

must be trained to properly use these masks and masks. Other workers who are exposed to a low level of risk must adhere to any other policies or guidelines issued by national or local authorities.

**\*Are there any guidelines for workplace ventilation and use of air conditioners?**

Good ventilation can be a way to avoid infection with Covid-19, so that people in this period tend to spend more time inside homes, facilities, and workplaces and not go out except for necessity, so the air in the workplace should be clean, as it is recommended to increase the ventilation rate without recycling the same air in tasks or jobs exposed to medium and high risks in light of this pandemic through natural ventilation by opening windows in the workplace or through artificial ventilation.

If there is recirculation of air in air conditioners, their filters should be regularly and safely cleaned, because not having enough fresh air in the workplace may increase the chance of catching Covid-19.

**\*What are the psychological and social supports that should be provided to workers in light of the Covid-19 pandemic?**

The Covid-19 pandemic is associated with many concerns, such as fear of illness, death, or quarantine, loss of a source of income or social exclusion in the case of a Covid-19 infection, and these fears are anxiety and depression for workers, and therefore support for workers' mental health should be provided in addition to psychological and social support for all groups of workers, the first step to support the mental health of workers is to understand the things that workers feel and the factors that affect them.

This support must include: remote workers, workers that are temporarily suspended and workers continuing to work in their usual workplace or returning to work in their workplace.







الاتحاد العربي للتقايات  
ARAB TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION

No.1 Said Al Mefthi Street - Swaifieh - Amman

Tel: (962 6) 5824829

Mobile: 0779776777

Email: info@arabtradeunion.org

www.arabtradeunion.org

ArabTradeUnion

