# Best Practices to Prevent COVID-19
# Guidance for Businesses and Employers

**For the latest version of this guidance, please check**
http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/reopening-la.htm

---

**Updates**

9/13/2021: Updated to recommend that employers take steps to reduce crowding indoors and to support physical distancing between employees and customers.

---

Given the ongoing community transmission of COVID-19 and the presence of the Delta variant, masking indoors and at outdoor Mega Events, regardless of vaccination status, is essential to slowing the spread of COVID-19. The Delta variant of the virus spreads much more easily than strains of the virus that circulated in LA in the past. Per published reports, factors that increase the risk of infection, including transmission to people more than 6 feet away, include:

- **Enclosed spaces with inadequate ventilation or air handling** that allow for build up of exhaled respiratory fluids, especially very fine droplets and aerosol particles, in the air.
- **Increased exhalation of respiratory fluids** that can occur when an infectious person is engaged in physical exertion or raises their voice (e.g., exercising, shouting, singing).
- **Prolonged exposure** to these conditions.

Below is a summary of requirements and best practices for businesses, employers, and organizations to enhance safety for their workers, customers, and communities, and lower the risk of COVID-19 transmission within their establishments. These requirements and recommendations apply to all businesses. In addition to this information, remember:

- Employers, businesses, and organizations must follow the Cal/OSHA COVID-19 Prevention Emergency Temporary Standards (ETS) and the County Health Officer Order. Please note that the directives in the LA County Health Officer Order must be followed when they are more stringent than the Cal/OSHA ETS.
- Employers must also continue to follow all applicable requirements in the County Health Officer Order, including the more protective measures of mandated indoor masking, regular testing of employees who are unvaccinated and unable to wear masks, and reporting of COVID-19 cases, clusters and outbreaks to the LA County Public Health Department.

## Prevent and reduce transmission from and among customers/visitors

✓ **Follow face mask rules for the public**: The LA County Health Officer Order requires people aged 2 years and older, regardless of vaccination status, to wear a face mask in all indoor public settings, including all public and private businesses, and at outdoor Mega Events. The purpose of continued masking is to prevent transmission of the virus particularly to persons with higher risk of infection (e.g., unvaccinated or immunocompromised persons), and to persons with prolonged, cumulative exposures (e.g., workers).

---

**Best Practices: Guidance for Businesses**

- ✓ **Customers may remove masks temporarily while indoors or while attending an outdoor Mega Event in only limited circumstances,** such as when they are **actively** eating or drinking in a designated dining area while in their seats, at a counter, or another stationary location, or while swimming, showering, or receiving a service that requires the removal of their face mask (e.g., waxing, facial, shaving). *"Actively eating or drinking"* refers to the limited time during which the mask can be briefly removed to eat or drink, after which it must be immediately put back on. The customer must wear a mask whenever they are not actively eating or drinking, such as when they are waiting to be served, between courses or drinks, or while seated after finishing the food and drink.

- ✓ **Please note that places that serve food and beverages to customers indoors are higher risk settings for transmission of COVID-19.** Establishments that serve food and beverages should review and follow all of the requirements and consider implementing the recommendations found in the DPH Food and Beverage Service Best Practices Guidance.

- ✓ **Use your online outlets and signage at the entry to your business** to explain your business's COVID-19 policies, including the requirement that everyone must wear a mask while indoors on your premises and the message that visitors must not enter the premises if sick or symptomatic.

## Prevent and reduce transmission among employees

- ✓ **Encourage vaccination**: COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective and are the best way to prevent COVID-19 outbreaks in the workplace and in the community. COVID-19 vaccine is widely available in every community. Employers with 26 or more employees must provide covered employees paid time off to attend vaccine appointments or if they are unable to work or telework due to vaccine-related symptoms. For more information, see the 2021 COVID-19 Supplemental Paid Sick Leave webpage. Consider offering a vaccination clinic at your workplace to make it more convenient for your employees to get vaccinated. Consider opportunities to support and incentivize your employees to get vaccinated or to make it easier to get vaccinated. This might include offering rewards such as paid time off or cash bonus payments, and/or policies that require employees to be fully vaccinated[1] against COVID-19 or that offer more flexibility for employees who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

- ✓ **Follow face mask rules for employees\***:

  - ✓ The County Health Officer Order requires that all employees wear a face mask while working indoors, in shared vehicles, and at outdoor Mega Events, regardless of vaccination status. Masks need not be worn indoors if the employee is alone in a room or actively eating or drinking. Public Health recommends that all employees who are eating or drinking indoors be spaced at least 6 feet from other persons.

  - ✓ Face masks help prevent workers who do not know they have the COVID-19 virus from spreading it to others and they provide protection to the wearer as well.

  - ✓ Upon request, employers are required to provide unvaccinated employees with the correct-size respirator along with basic instructions on how to use the respirator. Respirators must be replaced if they get damaged, deformed, dirty, or difficult to breathe through. For more

---

[1] You are considered fully vaccinated against COVID-19 two (2) weeks after: the second dose of a Pfizer or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine series, a single dose of Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine or you finished the series of a COVID-19 vaccine that has been listed for emergency use by the World Health Organization. See fully vaccinated web page for more information. If it is less than 2 weeks after your second or only dose, you do not have enough protection from the COVID-19 virus. It takes time for your body to build immunity. Continue to take prevention steps until 2 weeks have passed.

information about free and low-cost PPE for employers, visit: http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/docs/FreeAndLowCostPPE.pdf.

✓ Employees who work in a setting where they are in close contact with other people who may not be fully vaccinated should be encouraged to wear a higher level of protection, such as "double-masking" (wearing a cloth face mask OVER a surgical mask) or a respirator. This is especially important if the individual is not fully vaccinated against COVID-19 and is working in an indoor setting, in a crowded outdoor setting, or in a shared vehicle. For more general information about masks, see LAC DPH mask webpage at http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/masks.

✓ Consider also offering staff eye protection (e.g., a face shield) in addition to a respirator if they are not fully vaccinated and have significant close contact with others who may be unvaccinated.

✓ See the Los Angeles County Health Officer Order page and the Cal/OSHA Emergency Temporary Standards page for more information about mask requirements. Please note that the directives in the LA County Health Officer Order must be followed when they are more stringent than the Cal/OSHA temporary standards.

* Some independent contractors are considered to be employees under the State Labor Code. For more details, check the California Department of Industrial Relations' Independent Contractor Versus Employee webpage.

✓ **Actively encourage and support symptomatic, infected, or exposed employees to stay home**:

  ✓ Make sure employees know that they may not come to work if sick, or if they are under isolation or quarantine orders.

  ✓ Continue to educate employees about the symptoms of COVID-19 and what to do if they are sick. Make sure persons with COVID-19 follow self-isolation instructions. Workers who are not fully vaccinated and are close contacts to a case must quarantine unless exempt.

  ✓ Employers must develop and implement a process for screening employees for COVID-19 symptoms. Options include having employees evaluate their own symptoms before coming to work, using signage at the entrance of the workplace, or completing daily on-site screening to reinforce the message that employees who have COVID-19 symptoms and those who are under isolation or quarantine orders should not enter the workplace.

  ✓ Manage COVID-19 exposures in the workplace when it is learned that an employee is infected by readily identifying and informing exposed contacts as soon as possible. Have a plan to offer testing to employees who may have been exposed to COVID-19 at work. Refer to Responding to COVID-19 in the Workplace for more information. Please note that federal law requires health plans to continue to provide payment for testing without cost sharing, regardless of whether an individual has COVID-19 symptoms.

  ✓ Comply with reporting requirements if your workplace has a cluster of 3 or more cases of COVID-19 among workers within the span of 14 days. Contact the Department of Public Health at www.redcap.link/covidreport or by calling 888-397-3993 or 213-240-7821.

**Best Practices: Guidance for Businesses**

<span style="background:navy; color:white;">**Maintain a healthy work environment**</span>

- ✓ **Increase ventilation**: Effective ventilation is one of the most important ways to control small aerosol transmission. Make sure your building's HVAC system is in good, working order. Consider installing portable high-efficiency air cleaners, upgrading the building's air filters to the highest efficiency possible, and making other modifications to increase the quantity of outside air and ventilation in all working areas. When weather and working conditions allow, increase fresh outdoor air by opening windows and doors. Consider using fans to increase the effectiveness of open windows. Decrease occupancy in areas where outdoor ventilation cannot be increased.

- ✓ **Ensure water system safety**: To minimize the risk of Legionnaire's disease and other diseases associated with water, take steps to ensure that all water systems and features (e.g., drinking fountains, decorative fountains) are safe to use after a prolonged facility shutdown. This includes proper flushing and may require additional cleaning steps (including disinfection). Follow the CDC Guidance for Building Water Systems, which describes the 8 steps you should take before reopening your business or building.

- ✓ **Support hand hygiene**: Provide handwashing facilities for employees and ensure that they have adequate time to wash their hands during work time. Encourage employees to wash their hands for at least 20 seconds each time. See the CDC guidance, When and How to Wash Your Hands. Hand sanitizer should contain at least 60% alcohol. Do not provide hand sanitizers with methyl alcohol (methanol) or 1-prophyl alcohol (1-propanol). See the FDA hand sanitizer guidance for more information. Posters in multiple languages that remind people to wash or sanitize their hands and show how to wash their hands are available in the signage section of the web version of this guidance.

- ✓ **Cleaning and disinfection**: Worksites should consult CDC cleaning guidance to help determine how frequently their facility needs to be cleaned and/or disinfected. Cleaning once a day is usually enough. Employers should identify and regularly clean frequently touched surfaces and objects such as doorknobs, elevator buttons, tools, handrails, phones, headsets, bathroom surfaces and steering wheels. Any materials, areas, equipment or objects used by a COVID-19 case during the high-risk exposure period must be disinfected and may not be used by another employee for 24 hours after disinfection.

<span style="background:navy; color:white;">**Maintain healthy business operations**</span>

- ✓ **Reinforce paid leave policies**: Review your workplace leave policies and modify them to ensure that employees are not penalized when they stay home due to illness. Make sure that your employees are aware that they may be eligible for benefits such as paid sick leave or workers' compensation if they or a family member who they care for become sick with COVID-19 or if they need to quarantine due to exposure. Workers may also be eligible for paid leave to go to COVID-19 vaccination appointments or to recover from symptoms after getting their vaccination.

- ✓ **Protect employees who are at higher risk of severe illness**: Offer telework options for those at higher risk who are not fully vaccinated, or consider assigning duties or implementing safety modifications that minimize the employee's contact with customers and other employees.

- ✓ <mark>**Implement policies and practices that support physical distancing:** Whenever possible, take steps to reduce crowding indoors and enable employees and customers to physically distance from each other – generally at least 6 feet of distance (about 2 arm lengths) is recommended, although this is</mark>

==not a guarantee of safety, especially in enclosed or poorly ventilated spaces. Consider the following strategies:==

- ✓ **Limit indoor occupancy** to increase the physical space between employees at the worksite, between employees and customers, and between customers.

- ✓ **Use tape, signs, or other visual cues** such as decals or colored tape on the floor, placed six feet apart, to guide customers about where to stand to avoid crowding and to encourage distancing where lines may form.

- ✓ **Continue, where feasible, to offer telework options for employees.** During times of high community transmission, continue those teleworking arrangements that do not interfere with business operations. Telework significantly reduces the risk of exposure for employees, their households, and communities.

- ✓ **Implement flexible work hours,** such as staggered or rotating shifts, to reduce the number of employees onsite at any given time.

- ✓ **Alter the physical workspace to increase distance** between employee workstations and customers. Where distancing is not feasible, place barriers to block face-to-face pathways between individuals. Consider height and posture of affected employees, directional airflow, fire safety and the need for enhanced ventilation when designing and installing barriers.

✓ **Make meals and break times safer**:

- ✓ Encourage employees to eat outdoors, or alone in a closed office. If employees must eat indoors, they should be distanced by at least 6 feet (about 2 arm lengths) from others if in a shared indoor eating area.

- ✓ Remind employees who must eat indoors, that when they are actively eating or drinking, they need to be seated or positioned at a stationary place or counter.

- ✓ Stagger employee break times so fewer employees are using lunch or breakrooms at a time.

- ✓ Reconfigure breakrooms wherever possible to enable employees to maintain physical distancing of at least 6 feet while eating.

- ✓ Place signage to remind staff about taking care during mealtimes and while in shared breakrooms.

✓ Provide information – including the DPH COVID-19 Safety Workers Rights in California pamphlet (see Resources for other languages).

## Signage

Signage is available on masks, handwashing and staying away if you are sick and can be found online at http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/ncorona2019/BestPractices/#signage.

## Resources

Resources are available on safety measures, entry screening, workers' rights, and personal protective equipment can be found on the webpage at http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/ncorona2019/bestpractices/#resources.