

▶ COVID-19 and health facilities

Checklist of measures to be taken in health facilities

Version 1, June 2020

Protecting health personnel during the COVID-19 pandemic

This checklist applies the ILO-WHO HealthWISE participatory, action-orientated approach to prevent COVID-19 infection in health facilities and protect health personnel.

HealthWISE is a practical, participative method for improving the quality of workplaces and practices in health facilities. This checklist with a focus on how to protect health personnel during the response to COVID-19 has been drawn up by the ILO (International Labour Organization) in consultation with WHO (World Health Organization) and with the support of the Multi-Partner Trust Fund of the joint ILO-OECD-WHO programme Working for Health (version 1, June 2020).



© ILO, Health personnel in action at a Covid-19 test laboratory. Mpilo Central Hospital, Zimbabwe.

Important considerations

The checklist is a practical, participative tool for eliciting and guiding effective measures to protect the health and safety of health personnel during the COVID-19 pandemic.¹ It is intended for use in all health facilities, whether public or private, regardless of their size and geographical location.

When using the checklist, it is important that managers, staff and staff representatives observe important principles such as compliance with current legislation (including the relevant international labour standards), social dialogue, cooperation and gender sensitivity so as to provide an adequate, robust response to the COVID-19 pandemic in health facilities and deliver high-quality patient care.

It can be used by anyone working in health care who ensures that they are familiar with policies and programmes in the sector. The checklist can be applied alongside other tools used in health facilities. Cooperation between management and staff is essential to ensuring that the checklist is used to greatest effect.

¹ The checklist applies to all staff working in health facilities regardless of their status, function or duties. Special attention should be paid to ambulance staff, staff responsible for maintenance, cleaning and waste management, placement students and volunteers, who are often not fully briefed about occupational safety and health.

How to use this action checklist

- ▶ Read each paragraph carefully, consider ways to apply the measure and, among yourselves, discuss the question “Do you suggest any action?”
- ▶ If you consider that action to apply the measure is not necessary, tick the “No” box.
- ▶ If you think that action to apply the measure is necessary, tick the “Yes” box.
- ▶ Make sure that you have ticked “Yes” or “No” for each paragraph.
- ▶ Use the “Comments” space to describe any action selected or challenges identified.
- ▶ For all paragraphs where you have answered “Yes”, discuss whether, based on the high risk of COVID-19 infection or the large number of staff exposed, the “priority” box should be ticked or not.
- ▶ Draw up an action plan containing the actions selected, in particular measures identified as priority. You can also add measures that are not on the checklist and you consider important in your circumstances. You can use the template provided in the annex or choose your own template.
- ▶ Share the action plan with management and staff and obtain their approval.
- ▶ Implement your action plan, along with a sound monitoring and evaluation system that includes a suitable mechanism for revising it according to how the pandemic develops, and regularly update staff.

▶ 1. Preparedness plan for responding to COVID-19

1.1	Establish a system in the workplace for providing up-to-date, reliable information on the current situation with regard to COVID-19 and measures to be taken, and maintain regular communication with staff and their representatives, including by internet or telephone.	Do you suggest any action?
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
	Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/> Priority
1.2	Establish an effective mechanism for social dialogue with a view to improving staff safety, health and working conditions in view of demands placed on them by the COVID-19 pandemic.	Do you suggest any action?
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
	Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/> Priority

1.3	Depending on the size of your health facility, designate a person or team ¹ responsible for designing and implementing COVID-19 control in your workplace. This team could include managers, staff representatives and staff responsible for occupational safety and health.	Do you suggest any action?	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
	Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/> Priority	
1.4	Map risks for each workplace and task performed.	Do you suggest any action?	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
	Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/> Priority	
1.5	Plan and provide education and training for the team or person responsible for the COVID-19 response, managers, staff and their representatives that is appropriate to the needs and requirements of your workplace.	Do you suggest any action?	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
	Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/> Priority	
1.6	Mainstream gender into measures to prevent and respond to COVID-19 to enable women and men to balance work and family responsibilities.	Do you suggest any action?	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
	Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/> Priority	
1.7	Work with staff representatives to draw up a service continuity plan for the COVID-19 pandemic that covers supplies of medicines, medical equipment, personal protective equipment and transport.	Do you suggest any action?	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
	Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/> Priority	

¹ This team could be the safety and health committee if one exists. It could be extended to cover any relevant areas of expertise.

1.8	Produce alcohol-based handrub locally using the two formulations and the guidelines provided by WHO in situations where insufficient high-quality handrub is available.	Do you suggest any action?	
	Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
		<input type="checkbox"/> Priority	
1.9	In collaboration with staff representatives, put in place a preparedness and response plan at the facility, setting out standard operating procedures, duties, roles, responsibilities, specific tasks, and protocols and guidelines for dealing with safety incidents during the COVID-19 pandemic.	Do you suggest any action?	
	Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
		<input type="checkbox"/> Priority	

► 2. COVID-19 infection prevention and control

2.1	Establish an early detection and triage station for COVID-19 infection for staff, patients and visitors, including non-contact temperature taking, use of alcohol-based handrub ² and, where necessary, administration of a questionnaire in line with WHO guidance.	Do you suggest any action?	
	Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
		<input type="checkbox"/> Priority	

² According to WHO guidelines, an alcohol-based handrub must contain between 60 and 80 per cent v/v alcohol, and its efficacy must be evaluated using the European Standard EN 1500 or standards issued by the ASTM International (previously the American Society for Testing and Materials).

2.2	Ensure that each patient is examined, if possible, by a single caregiver and limit room occupancy by maintaining the minimum distance between individuals.	Do you suggest any action?
	Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Priority
2.3	Install alcohol-based handrub dispensers and hand washing stations equipped with soap and water to ensure good hand hygiene for patients and visitors.	Do you suggest any action?
	Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Priority
2.4	Promote the use by health personnel of WHO's "Five Moments for Hand Hygiene", ³ and provide posters and signs to raise awareness of good hand hygiene techniques.	Do you suggest any action?
	Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Priority
2.5	Promote the use of respiratory hygiene etiquette and the wearing of masks by patients and visitors, and provide posters and signs to raise awareness of good cough and sneeze etiquette.	Do you suggest any action?
	Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Priority
2.6	Take measures to ensure, as far as possible, a minimum distance between patients, visitors and staff according to the rules in your country ⁴ (e.g. room layout, floor markings and blocking off of visitor seats).	Do you suggest any action?
	Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Priority

3 WHO: Five moments for hand hygiene (Geneva, 2006).

4 Physical distancing should be implemented as far as possible. A physical distance of two metres between workers is considered adequate, unless national guidelines or the results of risk assessments indicate otherwise. ILO: A safe and healthy return to work during the COVID-19 pandemic. Policy brief (Geneva, 2020). Available online at https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---safework/documents/briefingnote/wcms_745549.pdf.

2.7	Avoid physical meetings and endeavour to use phone calls, emails or virtual meetings instead. If you need to hold meetings, arrange the space to allow adequate physical distancing.	Do you suggest any action?
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Priority
Comments:		
2.8	Introduce practical one-way systems in corridors and staircases to minimize human-to-human contact, and minimize lift occupancy by encouraging use of stairs as much as possible.	Do you suggest any action?
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Priority
Comments:		
2.9	Increase natural or mechanical ventilation of all areas, especially those where patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 are present. Avoid the use of individual fans.	Do you suggest any action?
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Priority
Comments:		
2.10	Regularly clean and disinfect rooms, lifts, door handles, water taps, switches, floors and work surfaces with clean water, detergents or disinfectants in line with the standard in force at the health facility ⁵ and ensure adequate arrangements for the safe disposal of waste.	Do you suggest any action?
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Priority
Comments:		
2.11	Wash linen regularly with clean water and detergent. Soiled linen must be placed in clearly labelled, leak-proof bags or containers after solid excreta have been carefully removed, and preferably machine washed with warm water at 60 to 90°C and laundry detergent.	Do you suggest any action?
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Priority
Comments:		

⁵ All staff responsible for environmental cleaning, laundry and dealing with bedding, towels and clothing from patients with COVID-19 must be trained and wear appropriate PPE.

2.12	Equip public toilets with flushes and have them cleaned at least twice a day by properly trained staff wearing appropriate personal protective equipment, and ensure that users maintain the minimum distance.	Do you suggest any action?
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Priority
	Comments:	
2.13	Provide completely separate, regularly cleaned toilets for patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19.	Do you suggest any action?
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Priority
	Comments:	
2.14	Provide completely separate, well-ventilated and regularly cleaned and disinfected isolation wards for patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19.	Do you suggest any action?
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Priority
	Comments:	
2.15	Limit the number of health personnel who can enter isolation wards and implement a system for logging entry to avoid transmission between patients and staff.	Do you suggest any action?
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Priority
	Comments:	
2.16	Identify and repair all leaks and overflows in sewerage systems and septic tanks to ensure proper disposal of wastewater, including wastewater produced by cleaning potentially infected reusable personal protective equipment and medical equipment.	Do you suggest any action?
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Priority
	Comments:	

2.17	Collect, treat and dispose of all waste from patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 following internal procedures.	Do you suggest any action?	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
		<input type="checkbox"/> Priority	
Comments:			

► 3. Staff protection

3.1	Assess workers' level of exposure to COVID-19 using the WHO form ⁶ provided for this purpose in order to distinguish between personnel at high and low risk of exposure.	Do you suggest any action?	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
		<input type="checkbox"/> Priority	
Comments:			
3.2	Establish a protocol for post-exposure management of COVID-19 and an appropriate mechanism for reporting and investigating accidental exposure.	Do you suggest any action?	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
		<input type="checkbox"/> Priority	
Comments:			
3.3	Ensure that properly equipped, well-ventilated premises are available in the event of a decision to quarantine staff at high risk of infection, and provide support to ensure the health and well-being of those quarantined.	Do you suggest any action?	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
		<input type="checkbox"/> Priority	
Comments:			

⁶ World Health Organization. (2020). Risk assessment and management of exposure of health care workers in the context of COVID-19: interim guidance, 19 March 2020. World Health Organization. Available at: <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/331496> License: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

3.4	Provide appropriate, suitable personal protective equipment (masks, gloves, gowns, goggles, visors and boots) for all personnel according to their workplace and tasks and ensure that it does not run out. Comprehensive training must be provided on the safe use of personal protective equipment, particularly during wearing and removal. ⁷	Do you suggest any action?	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
	Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/> Priority	
3.5	Clean and disinfect reusable equipment (such as stethoscopes and thermometers) between each patient and limit use of shared equipment.	Do you suggest any action?	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
	Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/> Priority	
3.6	Ensure the safe collection, packaging, labelling and transport of patient samples.	Do you suggest any action?	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
	Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/> Priority	
3.7	Follow good safety practices when performing injections, handling and disposing of sharp instruments and cleaning up spillages of blood and body fluids from patients.	Do you suggest any action?	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
	Comments:	<input type="checkbox"/> Priority	

⁷ Remove and discard the mask if it is damaged, soiled, wet, or uncomfortable to use. Workers should change into a new mask if they have touched their current one or when they re-start work after a break.

► 4. Staff working conditions, safety and health

4.1	Set appropriate working hours that take account of workers' family responsibilities and minimize overtime and irregular shifts. If necessary, provide suitable compensation systems.	Do you suggest any action?	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
		<input type="checkbox"/> Priority	
Comments:			
4.2	Allow staff to take breaks during working hours to help them to recover from fatigue, and grant them daily and weekly rest breaks and paid holiday in line with current legislation.	Do you suggest any action?	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
		<input type="checkbox"/> Priority	
Comments:			
4.3	Ensure that adequate numbers of staff are available to respond to COVID-19, for example by recruiting and training additional staff such as unemployed health professionals, health-care students in their final year of training, retired doctors and nurses, and volunteers.	Do you suggest any action?	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
		<input type="checkbox"/> Priority	
Comments:			
4.4	Ensure that all staff and their dependants receive the social security benefits due to them under current legislation, including in the event of occupational accidents and diseases, paying particular attention to volunteers and placement students.	Do you suggest any action?	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
		<input type="checkbox"/> Priority	
Comments:			

4.5	Ensure sufficient drinking water is provided for staff in satisfactory safety conditions.	Do you suggest any action?
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Priority
	Comments:	
4.6	Implement a policy of zero tolerance to any stigma or discrimination related to COVID-19 infection.	Do you suggest any action?
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Priority
	Comments:	
4.7	Implement effective measures to protect staff from violence and harassment, in particular procedures for filing complaints, conducting investigations, resolving disputes, training staff, and protecting anonymity and confidentiality.	Do you suggest any action?
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Priority
	Comments:	
4.8	Introduce effective stress management measures to protect and support staff.	Do you suggest any action?
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Priority
	Comments:	
4.9	Provide rest areas near workspaces where staff can rest and recover from fatigue.	Do you suggest any action?
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Priority
	Comments:	

4.10	Stagger breaks to reduce pressure on rest and eating areas, and ensure that staff have access to adequate food.	Do you suggest any action?	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
		<input type="checkbox"/> Priority	
	Comments:		
4.11	Provide and maintain changing rooms and sanitary facilities for staff, and regulate their use so that minimum distances are maintained, good hygiene ensured and the risk of infection reduced.	Do you suggest any action?	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
		<input type="checkbox"/> Priority	
	Comments:		
4.12	Offer appropriate psychological and social support to sick and quarantined staff.	Do you suggest any action?	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
		<input type="checkbox"/> Priority	
	Comments:		

▶ Annex. Action plan template

Target area	Description of the problem	Suggested action	Date of completion	Who is responsible?	What do we need?	Progress*

* For example, you can put *= started, **= advanced, or ***= completed

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