

## **Coronavirus advice for employees and employers**

### **Protecting the health and safety of employees**

Advice for people working in the Netherlands concerning the new coronavirus (COVID-19)

# **ArboNed**



## Colophon

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### Compilation

This advice has been compiled with the help of HumanTotalCare's Corona outbreak management team. This team consists of the director of Medical Affairs, (company) doctors, senior employment & organisation advisors, managers of organisational advice, occupational hygienists, ergonomists, company social workers, (company) psychologists and the prevention officers associated with HumanTotalCare or one of its brands: ArboNed, HumanCapitalCare, Mensely or Focus. From these brands, HumanTotalCare works on the sustainable employability of people working in the Netherlands. In this advice for employers and employees, you will find the knowledge of experts and references to websites of the different brands. This way, you can take full advantage of the knowledge of our experts. The Corona outbreak management team can be reached via [coronavirus@arboned.nl](mailto:coronavirus@arboned.nl).

### More information

- For general questions about the coronavirus, please contact the RIVM. The RIVM can be reached by telephone through the special telephone number 0800-1351.
- [ArboNed website](#)
- [www.rijksoverheid.nl](http://www.rijksoverheid.nl)
- [www.thuisarts.nl](http://www.thuisarts.nl)
- [www.who.int](http://www.who.int)

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# Part 1: Information for everybody

## Justification

This year, we must learn to live and work in the presence of (the consequences of) the coronavirus. Nevertheless, it is important that our society, including your organisation, continues to function optimally and that that we unburden healthcare wherever possible. Being a good employer and a good employee means that it is up to both parties to do their utmost to prevent infection and to make decisions in good consultation.

The guidelines and information provided by [RIVM](#) and other reliable sources are leading in these matters. In addition to these, this Coronavirus Advice for Employees and Employers provides advice focused on the work situation. This will help you prevent your organisation from being confronted with an unexpectedly large number of sickness reports at the same time.

You will notice that this Coronavirus Advice for Employees and Employers sometimes goes further than the measures taken by the government. This is because we pay extra attention to safety on the work floor and business continuity. Our additional advice is in line with that of the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO). Moreover, in contrast to the advice given by the government, it is non-binding.

## About the new coronavirus (COVID-19<sup>1</sup>)

It is still of the utmost importance to slow down the spread of the coronavirus as much as possible. Every day that the virus is slowed down saves time for healthcare. This leads to better survival and chance of a full recovery for all patients.

## Diagnosis

The disease COVID-19 has different manifestations. The period between infection and the onset of the first symptoms is called the incubation period. Most people develop symptoms on day five or six after infection, rarely after twelve days or later. The RIVM considers a quarantine period of fourteen days to be safe.

Some people experience no complaints at all, others only mild respiratory complaints (sore throat, coughing, sneezing, loss of smell and/or taste), and some suffer from fever, shortness of breath, fatigue, abdominal complaints, and muscle pain. In practice, it is difficult to determine who is or is not infected with the coronavirus. As a result, we lack the certainty of a diagnosis. The government takes the safe side and asks everyone in the Netherlands to work from home and avoid crowds as much as possible.

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<sup>1</sup> The scientific name for the new coronavirus is SARS-CoV-2. This document uses the name as it is also used by the RIVM, namely: COVID-19.

## Hands and contact surfaces

How long the virus can be transmitted via contact surfaces (e.g. taps, door handles, and counters) depends on the type of material and the circumstances. According to initial estimates, this can occur between four hours and nine days. Disinfection or washing away with regular cleaning agents is sufficient to make a contact surface safe again. The best way to protect yourself is to wash your hands with liquid soap regularly for twenty seconds. This flushes away any virus particles that have stuck to your hands.

## Reliable tests

The GGD has been very selective with its testing policy so far. As Minister Hugo de Jonge announced, there will be a rapid easing of the testing policy in the coming weeks. The goal is to reach the point at which every Dutch person with complaints matching the coronavirus can be tested in June. Tremendous efforts are being made to take these coronate tests. Usually, a coronate test has to be requested by a doctor (e.g. company doctor, general practitioner, GGD). The processing times between test request and test result via the GGD test lanes can be up to 5 days. If you may have become infected at work or could spread the coronavirus, the company doctor may request a test for you. For more information, please visit our [COVID-19 Check webpage](#) (Dutch). Also see the chapter 'Test requests by occupational health and safety service' for more information.

At the moment, two types of tests are considered reliable.

- The first is intended to detect active disease (COVID-19). This consists of taking a little mucus from the nose and throat. This is used to perform a PCR test. This test can only be used in acute disease: complaints must exist for at least 24 hours. In case of longer existing complaints (such as after two weeks), this test is no longer usable. This test is often used by the GGD.
- The second type of test is intended to determine whether someone has already had the virus and has already produced antibodies. This test consists of taking blood samples, where one looks for antibodies against this coronavirus. The blood is used to conduct a so-called serological test.

Both tests are conducted on behalf of hospitals, the GGD, scientific laboratories or, for example, the Sanquin blood bank. The RIVM has drawn up information letters for confirmed [coronavirus patients](#) and [their family members](#) with more information.

## Commercial (rapid) testing

There are currently 133 different providers of coronate testing, mostly with a commercial purpose. The reliability of these tests is very variable. Currently, a great deal of research is being conducted into the various tests and their reliability. The use of these commercial tests is currently still discouraged by the Health and Youth Care Inspectorate (IGJ).

## Screening with questionnaires

Recently, there are changed rules in the field of screening using questionnaires. Customers are allowed to be screened this way; employees are not allowed to be screened this way. This is due to legal objections from the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR/AVG) and the inequality of power between employer and employee. However, an employer is allowed to give instructions to employees requesting them to stay away in case of complaints.

Because the employer has the obligation under the Working Conditions Act to make the working environment safe for employees, it is now permitted to screen clients using questionnaires. There is no inequality of power among customers because a customer has a free choice to purchase the services/products offered. The GDPR conditions must also be met when making customers answer questionnaires. We advise you to submit a standard questionnaire to your visitors prior to the customer visit. See Appendix 1 for a coronavirus questionnaire example.

An employer must, however, communicate clear instructions to employees and third parties: that they are expected not to go to the workplace with complaints matching the coronavirus. The Dutch Data Protection Authority (A.P.) makes an exception for employers in health care. Only they are allowed to check their employees for corona.

### **Temperature measurements**

Recently, new advice has been given on temperature measurements for employees. If only the temperature is read and nothing is stored, processed or passed on, the privacy rules do not apply. You may make temperature readings available, but as an employer, you may not use them. You must leave the measurement and interpretation of the measurement entirely to the employee. This is a difficult position to implement in practice, and there are penalties for non-compliance with privacy legislation. On top of that, however, temperature measurements at the door are not reliable nor desirable. It is frequently used internationally with infrared thermometers where no touch is required. However, this temperature measurement is only reliable after the person in question has been acclimatised for half an hour. The employee who takes the measurements is unnecessarily exposed to frequent contact. An employer could consider providing this employee with protective clothing. This is also undesirable given the shortage of protective clothing in regular healthcare.

### **Group immunity**

The coronavirus can no longer spread if there is group immunity among the world population. Some people are naturally insensitive to this virus and will never get sick of it. And some people have already had the disease COVID-19 and have produced antibodies. For both groups, it is still unclear whether this form of immunity is complete. They are protected and will probably not become seriously ill (anymore). People who (continue to) carry the virus, may still be able to spread the virus. In science, we call this 'carriers.' Until more is known about this, we cannot assume that people are entirely immune to the coronavirus. The best way to become entirely immune is to get a vaccine, but that development might take at least one to one and a half years.

### **Long recovery**

The majority of people have few or no symptoms after infection, but a small part develops severe symptoms that require treatment in a hospital. The risk of dying from the virus increases with age, but serious complications can also occur in young people with health problems. People who have been admitted to a hospital, especially if they have had artificial respiration, often have a long recovery; think of several weeks to months.



## Occupational health and safety service

Your occupational health and safety service and company doctor can advise you on measures to limit health damage and associated complications and to continue the work within your organisation as much as possible. This with attention to the welfare of employees, the welfare of third parties, and business continuity. In addition to this Coronavirus Advice for Employees and Employers, you will find an overview of frequently asked questions for [employees](#) and [employers](#) on our [website](#).

### Test requests by occupational health and safety service

The eligibility criteria for a COVID-19 test have been broadened since April 6, 2020. As a result, more and more Dutch people are eligible for a corona test based on their profession in case of certain complaints. This expansion is done in phases on dates announced in advance so that ultimately, everyone is eligible for testing.

We inform, advise, refer and, if necessary, guide employees with complaints who are tested on COVID-19. At the request of the government, we collaborate with the GGD. The processing times between test request and test result via the GGD test lanes can be up to 5 days. If you have an employee who may have COVID-19, our professionals can request a test for one if you are a customer. For the most current situation, please check our [COVID-19 Check webpage](#) (Dutch).

The test is intended for employees who have symptoms of illness matching COVID-19 for at least 24 hours: coughing and/or shortness of breath and/or fever. As soon as an employee has registered for a test on COVID-19 using the registration form, we will forward the registration to the GGD. Some GGDs use a different working method. Your employee will be informed of the procedure that applies to one by the relevant GGD. The GGD then invites the employee for a test, within 48 hours if possible. This test consists of a throat and mouth smear.

The results of the test will be shared with your employee by the GGD or our professionals, within 48 hours if possible. Based on the results, your employee will receive appropriate (work) advice and careful guidance from our professionals in the next steps to be taken. If the GGD chooses to give the results to the employee, we will often call again a few days later to check whether there are any questions. If necessary, the company doctor will follow the further steps as prescribed in the Dutch Gatekeeper Improvement Act (Wet verbetering poortwachter).

### Regular services

A company doctor determines whether an employee is capacitated or incapacitated for work due to a medical cause. This assessment is the same if there is contamination with - or disease by - the coronavirus. A company doctor has medical confidentiality and may not inform you of the nature of the health complaints. The Netherlands Society of Occupational Medicine (NVAB) has advised doing all consultation hours by telephone if possible. We follow this advice from the NVAB.

### **Individual (reintegration) projects**

Your company doctor continues to provide analyses and advice, and as an employer or employee, you have an obligation to carry these out as well as possible. Due to (the measures surrounding) the coronavirus, the employer may not be able to carry out a (reintegration) project for individual employees. Make a clear note of this in your records, such as the Plan of Action. What measures have you been unable to implement, and why not? For more information, please visit the website of the UWV: [Addendum: Wet verbetering poortwachter i.v.m. COVID-19](#) (Dutch).

### **Additional coronavirus services**

As an employer, you can call on our occupational health and safety service. Specialists can assist you with/at:

- Advice on working in the new reality – a start-up check under the guidance of our experts.
- Participation in your crisis team and drawing up a business continuity plan.
- Advice on preventive measures.
- Assessment of health risks and measures of your (individual) employees, among other things to protect vulnerable employees (sick and/or pregnant) and employees with an increased risk.
- Advice on measures to be taken in the event of (suspected) infection with the coronavirus in an employee.
- Advice on dealing with the mental strain of your employees (loneliness, trauma, and mourning) and tensions on the work floor.
- Advice on managing employees working from home.
- Remote workplace research: online (home) workplace check.

### **Sickness reports**

In the first weeks following the announcement of the government's measures to work from home and close schools, there was a historic peak in the number of absenteeism reports. This peak was partly caused by a lack of clarity as to when an employee should or should not be registered as sick. Meanwhile, the absenteeism figures have dropped back to a normal level for this period of the year. This may continue to change throughout the duration of this pandemic.

As an employer, you must respect the (medical) privacy of employees. If you consider registering your employee as sick, you ask yourself the question: is my employee too sick to work? If so, register one as sick. However, if your employee is unable to work due to government measures or other circumstances, it depends on the situation. The table below may provide a definite answer. If you have any doubts about this, it is a good idea to consult with your occupational health and safety service.

If there is no reason to register your employee as sick, you can facilitate work(ing from home) or use normal leave arrangements such as holidays, emergency leave, (short-term) care leave, and parental leave.

If there is no more work for employee(s), the employer is obliged to continue to pay their salary. The employer may be able to appeal to the Temporary Emergency Bridging Measure for Sustained Employment ([Noodmaatregel Overbrugging voor Werkbehoud - NOW](#)). Under

the requirements of the NOW, employers can apply for a substantial contribution towards the wage costs and receive an advance payment for this from the UWV. This way, employers can continue to pay employees with a fixed and flexible contract.

<b>Situation. Your employee is:</b>	<b>Register as sick?*</b>	<b>What can you do?</b>
Unable to work due to health problems.	Yes	Call in the company doctor in good time for advice and consultation
Unable to work due to health problems caused by the coronavirus.	Yes	Call in the company doctor in good time for advice and consultation
Able to work, but not allowed to perform one's work due to illness or disability.	Yes	Facilitate work(ing from home). Consult with the company doctor about suitable work.
Able to work, but not allowed to come to work because of government measures.	No	Facilitate work(ing from home). Appeal to the NOW scheme.
Able to work, but put in isolation/quarantine by the GGD.	No	Facilitate work(ing from home). Appeal to the NOW scheme.
Able to work, but does not want to come out of fear of contamination.	No	Use normal leave schemes, such as holidays.
Able to work, but needs to take care of a sick person.	No	Use normal leave schemes, such as short-term care leave.
Planning to report sick to prevent financial damage to my organisation.	No	Appeal to the NOW scheme, if possible.

If your employee is unable to work due to illness, please let us know. We treat this sickness registration according to the regular working method in which we, as an occupational health and safety service, are bound by professional guidelines and the Dutch Gatekeeper Improvement Act (Wet verbetering poortwachter). It will often be a short absence, and a consultation with the company doctor will not be necessary.

## Special groups of employees

The risk of infection with the new coronavirus is basically the same for everyone. However, there are particular groups of employees for whom infection with the coronavirus can lead to greater consequences. You can think of employees with vulnerable health. But also of employees with an increased risk based on their work or personal situation, such as having a vulnerable family member. It is a good idea to discuss the concerns of employees.

Your employee does not need to share medical information with you, as this is considered confidential information. If it concerns employees who themselves think they are at risk because of a medical problem, you can ask them to contact the occupational health and safety service. The company doctor has medical confidentiality and can assess the health condition and risk of your employees. The company doctor can then advise you in weighing all the various factors concerning work. The decision of the company doctor is of an advisory nature (Working Conditions Act).

### **Employees with fragile health**

Employees with vulnerable health (vulnerable employees according to the RIVM definition) have an increased risk of a severe disease course if they become infected with the coronavirus. This means that they are more likely to suffer serious complications, have longer recovery time and a higher risk of death. Therefore, these vulnerable employees need extra protection against infection with the coronavirus: at home and work. Vulnerable employees should completely avoid large groups and travelling by public transport. Your occupational health and safety service can help you assess the risks of the workplace and the (individual) employees. This group includes, in any case:

- Pregnant workers: all pregnant women have fragile health that you should take into account (precautionary principle). From the third trimester, they are exempt from work involving direct contact with persons or materials contaminated by the coronavirus.
- (Chronically) ill employees: the risk must be assessed on an individual basis.

### **Employees at increased risk**

We divide high-risk employees into two groups.

1. Employees who have an increased risk of infection based on their position.  
This relates to the working conditions (the workload). This may be due to the content of the work or to a large number of (close) contacts, such as in childcare and elementary education. Also think of employees who may perform patient-related work, employees with frequent physical customer contact or employees in the cleaning industry.
2. Employees with a vulnerable person in their personal environment.  
Special consideration must be made if an employee has a vulnerable family member. Think of informal carers or people with a child in vulnerable health. In that situation, there is an increased personal risk. After all, if this employee becomes infected, it can have severe consequences for the home situation.

### **Employees who pose a risk**

If you are dealing with patients or customers with fragile health, your employee may pose a risk in the workplace. You must realise this. If this is the case within your organisation, we advise you to contact your occupational health and safety service. Guidelines have often already been developed for this through your trade association or professional federation. The Dutch Occupational Hygiene Society (NVvA) has published an overview of branch information. The RIVM has written a recommendation for contact professions.

## Part 2: Information for organisations

### Government measures

The employer has an obligation to ensure the safety and health of its employees, but also of third parties (visitors, customers, pupils, patients). To ensure public health and to slow down the spread of the coronavirus, the government regularly presents an extension of the package of [government measures](#). You must follow the urgent advice of the government. This will require great flexibility from you. If you want tailored advice for your organisation, you can call in our experts.

How your organisation deals with the concerns of employees during this crisis will make a deep impression. This impression can play a long-term role in the mutual relationship, both positively and negatively. Be aware of this when making choices for your organisation and your employees.

### Working from home is still the norm

The government has appealed to all Dutch people to work from home as much as possible. As an employer, you must respond to this call and facilitate it as much as possible. It may be the case that working from home is impossible for (a part of) your organisation. You can read more about this in 'Part 3: At the workplace.'

Please keep in mind that if the healthcare system becomes overloaded, a lockdown can again be announced. Because the current measures apply for a more extended period, it is important that your employees can work from home healthily and sustainably. For further information, see 'Part 4: Working from home.'

### Working parents

Primary schools, daycare, out-of-school care, and special education have opened for a maximum of 50% on May 11. Schools and day-care centres remaining partially closed means that working parents who are not part of [crucial professional groups](#) will still have to make extra efforts to provide out-of-school care for their child(ren). This is challenging because care by grandparents is not self-evident, because they may belong to the vulnerable group of people. The [Netherlands Youth Institute](#) offers parents advice on how to deal with the 'new' home situation. Make an inventory, now and in the future, of the employees who may be affected by the lack of out-of-school care. Provide appropriate policies and solutions, such as granting emergency leave or parental leave, and inform your employees about this.

### International travels

The government currently discourages all international travel and no longer uses the term risk areas. After all, this suggests that safe or virus-free regions still exist. This is currently no longer the case: the whole world is colour coded orange due to the spread of the coronavirus. The measures announced by governments often have far-reaching consequences for travellers. Please keep in mind that circumstances in a country can change rapidly at the moment.

If you have an employee returning from abroad, we advise you to allow this person to work from home preventively for 14 days upon return. If you currently have employees who are abroad or who are going on a necessary trip, we advise the following:

- Find out if it is necessary to recall employees now.
- Keep in mind that borders can be closed ad hoc, causing travellers to get stuck.
- Keep in touch with employees who are going abroad or have gone abroad or who are staying abroad for you as an expat.
- Let travellers take extra care of good hygiene and realise that hygiene products are no longer available anywhere in the world.
- Take into account insufficient availability of medical facilities, due to the expected overload of (possibly underdeveloped) healthcare.

The previous special assistance abroad for Dutch nationals has been discontinued. You can still contact the B.Z. Contact centre 24/7.

## **The resilience of your organisation**

### **Easing and lifting measures**

The government will ease or lift the measures in reverse order. If the measures are eased, there will probably be more room for customisation, because there is less time pressure. The expectation is that there will be a one-and-a-half-metre society for a longer time. The easing, lifting or tightening again of the measures is strongly related to the number of hospital admissions. Therefore, this period, too, requires continuous flexibility and adaptability on the part of employers and employees. Use the current period to prepare everyone for this.

### **Communication**

Now that meeting each other occurs less and the government regularly announces new (terms for) measures, good communication is essential. Make sure you can inform at short notice your employees and, if necessary, your customers, suppliers, and visitors. In any case, share information about the following:

- Inform about the measures taken in the context of the coronavirus.
- Inform about guidelines for sick leave and special leave.
- Inform about any reduction in working hours (if applicable).
- Consider setting up a central communication point for the various target groups.
- Guarantee that employees are easy to reach:
  - Write down private numbers in consultation (if necessary).
  - Consider starting up app groups for short communication lines.

### **Business continuity plan**

Your business continuity plan helps you to be prepared for the internal and external consequences of lifting, easing or tightening (again) government measures:

- Evaluate your business continuity plan and adjust it where necessary.
- Focus on your core business. How can you continue work with the now known and expected measures?
- How can you flexibly deal with the circumstances?

- Establish criteria and procedures to determine when and how your organisation will return to normal business operations. Take into account any measures that may still apply (at home and abroad).

### **Keeping employees**

The coronavirus and government measures have major financial consequences for many organisations. That is why the government has set up economic support measures to help employers, employees, and self-employed people. Hopefully, this will make it possible to keep employees employed for as long as possible. After all, employees, their craftsmanship, and high-quality knowledge are precious to an organisation. Especially when your organisation will be able to restart or scale-up again in the near future, and peak pressure may arise. A good relationship of trust between employer and employee ensures that you can come to good agreements together; even if this means that an employee cannot remain employed (temporarily). Employees who have a good relationship of trust with their employer will also be more inclined to return to employment when this is possible again.

### **Resilient organisation**

Besides trust, other values also play an essential role in the resilience of your organisation. By working on values such as teamwork, accountability, and adaptability, you increase the resilience of your organisation. Reinforce your vision, mission, and values to build internal cohesion. Values such as control, internal competition, hierarchy, and bureaucracy are counterproductive. It is important to continue to reward initiatives in this day and age and to see what initiatives you can continue after the corona crisis.

Actively communicate with employees and customers. By keeping them informed about the position of your organisation, fears can be suppressed. By listening carefully to them, the organisation can also come up with ideas for new services, strategic alliances, and cost reduction, for example. Share your practical experiences internally and with other organisations. Try to maintain the right lines of communication agreed upon in official communication. This provides overview and predictability, and thus peace of mind.

### **Leadership**

Many managers will recognise that their role in this period is different. Custom measures apply at the (home) workplace, colleagues are working remotely or in adapted shifts, and there may be concerns among employees. Managers are there to create the frameworks within which employees can work healthily and productively, including from home.

This means, among other things, that you must also provide clarity about when not to work and when the work is done. To prevent the blurring of the boundary between private and work, show that employees are seen despite the distance. Keep in close contact with the team members and organise moments of consultation.

It is important to be able to steer on results and to feel trust. For this, it is crucial to communicate clearly about goals and to agree on output as measurably as possible. This way, employees know that they have met the expectations and can end the day with peace of

mind. As a manager, you do not have to doubt the productivity or effectiveness of your employees. After all, you have visible results. This increases trust on both sides.

The following tips help managers to promote employee motivation and resilience:

- Trust the strength of the team and radiate that confidence. Set a good example. A difficult period like this can also create an enormous connection and loyalty between employees and your organisation.
- Take the time to send positive messages to your team and employees:
  - You do what you can with the best intentions.
  - You do important work.
  - We do our work as well as we can.
  - We do not know what will come, but we are well prepared.
  - We take care of ourselves and have an eye for each other.
  - Taking care of yourself means taking responsibility, such as resting on time, sleeping, eating healthily, and seeking positive distractions.
- Practice expectation management. It is good to create realistic expectations among employees and to state that you do not have all the answers. Recognise that fewer resources/opportunities/people are available to do the job. Also, do not be afraid to name and discuss the worst-case scenario.
- Give room for the emotions of your employees. Each person finds oneself in a unique situation and is confronted with one's own difficult moments. It is perfectly legitimate that this leads to feelings of fear, sadness, insecurity, powerlessness, frustration, and anger. Negative emotions are a normal reaction to an abnormal situation. Do not come up with solutions immediately and do not downplay the situation. Acknowledge the feelings and experience.
- If you receive signals of psychological complaints, it is good to take quick action. In the initial phase, valuable help can be provided by the healthcare system and your occupational health and safety service. Pay attention to irritability, depressive feelings, and sleeping problems, among other things.
- If you have new employees, it is good to set up a buddy system between the new and the more experienced employees. In a normal situation, a new employee can follow the closest colleague's example. Now that the distance has literally increased, this is more difficult. By assigning a buddy per person, the threshold is lower to ask for advice.
- Ask your employees what they need and, where possible, let them direct themselves. Especially in a situation of force majeure or feelings of powerlessness, directing oneself can bring back peace and self-confidence.
- Be careful not to forget anyone. In the current situation, it is easy to lose sight of people. Realise that underload, sitting still, and having to wait can also be stressful.
- Regularly evaluate working with the stricter measures in the workplace or at home.
  - How is it experienced?
  - What went well. What was difficult?
  - What insights did it bring us in the long term?



## **Mental well-being: sadness and mourning**

As a result of the coronavirus, our society is confronted with a large number of sick people and, unfortunately, also deaths in a relatively short period. Because of the coronavirus measures, many things are different than people are used to.

For example, a person can normally take care of their loved ones, but this is now often not possible due to isolation measures and visitor restrictions. This can also mean that in the event of death, there is or has been no opportunity to say goodbye in person. Sometimes family members and friends will not be able to attend a funeral or memorial service. This has an extraordinarily large impact on all those involved. It is good to understand this and to be prepared for it.

### **Emotional strain**

Employees can be (emotionally) affected by the consequences of the coronavirus in different ways. You can think of employees:

- who are affected by a lack of healthcare capacity, which makes them less likely to be helped with their illnesses.
- who are unable to continue caring for their loved ones because of the ban on visiting vulnerable people.
- of whom (one of the) loved ones are affected by disease, but who they are unable to visit because of the risk of infection.
- of whom (one of the) loved ones have died.
- who are confronted with excessive sickness and death in the surrounding area via other routes.

Each person processes frustration, grief, and mourning in their own way. There may be a great need for contact and being together, for which there is now less opportunity. But the employee in question may also feel the need to withdraw for a certain period. In any case, a grieving employee temporarily cannot be fully burdened with work. It is good to keep in touch with your employees and let each one follow one's path in this. Some will want to resume work soon; others will need more time to do so. You can get advice from your occupational health and safety service: company social work, company doctor or psychologist.

### **Mourning protocol**

Your organisation may be affected by a death directly or indirectly. Drawing up a mourning protocol ensures that everyone knows what to do in this challenging period. In a mourning protocol, you include every possible action: from sending flowers/mourning card and informing colleagues appropriately to opening an online book of condolence and ensuring the continuity of the work.

In appendix 2, you will find an example of a mourning protocol.

## Part 3: On the job

### Working on location

Approximately forty per cent of the Dutch still go to work every day because it is tied to a location. If it is impossible for (a part of) your organisation to work from home, the employer must take appropriate measures. The advice below helps to keep the workplace safe. Additional government measures apply to various industries. Consult your trade association or professional federation and the website of the Dutch government and RIVM. The Dutch Occupational Hygiene Society (NVvA) has published an overview of branch information. The RIVM has written a recommendation for contact professions.

You can also use the document '[The coronavirus — Healthy and safe working](#)' as a tool, which you can find on our website. We can also provide you with tailored advice on working in the new reality.

### Keeping away from the workplace: suspicion is enough

Suspicion of the coronavirus in an employee or one's family members is sufficient reason to keep the employee away from the workplace. You may report directly and repeatedly that people who meet one of the following criteria are temporarily not welcome and are requested not to enter the workplace. Repeat this at every initial contact and request to turn any meetings into meetings by telephone. Please refer to Appendix 1 for a coronavirus questionnaire example.

Keep away from the workplace any person who:

- has mild respiratory symptoms (nose cold, coughing, sore throat, loss of smell or taste) and/or fever.
- has had close contact with a person with respiratory symptoms and/or fever (a sick person). Close contact means:
  - Being within two metres of a sick person for fifteen minutes.
  - Sharing a living space with a sick person (such as family members).
  - Physical contact with a sick person (such as shaking hands).
- has returned from abroad in the past fourteen days.

### Crucial professions and vital processes

[Crucial professional groups](#) and/or vital processes have been identified by the government. However, everything possible must be done for these professional groups and processes too to follow the government measures. It remains important in every industry to have as many employees working from home as possible and to keep employees with health complaints away from the workplace. The fact that employees belong to a crucial professional group and/or work in vital processes does not mean that these employees are irreplaceable by definition. See how the vital process can continue without this employee. For example, through temporary replacement from a permanent pool of trained temporary employees.

Keep away all employees with respiratory complaints and/or fever until they are complaint-free for 24 hours. After all, they can be carriers of the coronavirus and infect colleagues or

third parties in the workplace. It is precisely at these workplaces that we must keep the spread of the coronavirus to a minimum to guarantee the continuity of the vital process and the organisation. A [separate policy](#) (Dutch) has been drawn up specifically for healthcare workers.

If your employee is irreplaceable and the vital process is in danger, you still need to keep employees with a fever away from the workplace. For employees with respiratory complaints that are irreplaceable, you can adjust the work. In that case, arrange for an individual workplace and let this employee avoid contact with others. Clean the workplace with regular cleaning products after use by the employee in question.

### **A sick person at work**

If a person unexpectedly appears to have respiratory symptoms and/or fever at the workplace, we recommend the following measures:

- Send the employee in question home immediately; the employee may return if one and one's family members are completely symptom-free for 24 hours.
- Ventilate the room(s) where the employee has been for half an hour.
- Clean and disinfect all contact surfaces (e.g. tools, keyboard, stair railings, lift buttons) with regular cleaning products.

### **Coronavirus at work**

If there is a confirmed corona infection in the workplace, we recommend the following:

- If the person had complaints during attendance at the workplace, take the actions listed under 'Sick person at work.'
- Ask the GGD for advice and inform your occupational health and safety service.
- If possible, make a logbook of persons with whom the employee in question has had close contact (physical touch and/or within 2 metres for 15 minutes). Handle the privacy of all parties involved with care.
- If possible, keep employees with whom the person has been in close contact from the workplace preventively for a period of fourteen days. Handle the privacy of all parties involved with care.
- Make an anonymised announcement to all employees with:
  - An extra call to be alert for respiratory complaints.
  - Information about the measures taken/to be taken by you.
- Pay special attention to concerns among vulnerable employees and high-risk employees.

### **Returning to work**

You will often be dealing with employees who have not been subjected to a coronation test. If a person suspected of corona and one's family members do not develop any symptoms of illness within the incubation period of fourteen days, it is plausible that there is no longer any risk of infection. However, if a family member of the employee does fall ill, the incubation period of fourteen days starts again for the employee. For employees who have been ill and who have fully recovered, it applies that they can return to work when they (and their family members) are complaint-free for 24 hours.

You may also be dealing with an employee where you are certain that they have experienced the COVID-19 disease because of a coronary test. How long it takes for the former COVID-19

patient to return to work depends on the severity and type of symptoms. This employee must be completely symptom-free for at least 48 hours and at least seven days must have passed from the first day of illness, and sometimes even fourteen days. Please note: COVID-19 is a disease that has a slow recovery with complaints like extreme fatigue and concentration problems. An employee may overestimate oneself and want to do more than is medically wise. Here too, the company doctor can advise you.

Should these employees return to work, however, their colleagues may experience anxiety. Please pay attention to this by informing said colleagues beforehand and comforting them. If necessary, call in the help of external professionals, such as a company doctor or company social worker.

### **Safety of the premises**

The virus cannot enter through the normal skin, but it can enter the mucous membranes of the eyes, nose, mouth, and respiratory tract through droplets. These droplets can only bridge a limited distance. There are indications that providing good ventilation can reduce the risk of infection. We recommend the following:

- If you have mechanical ventilation, set the ventilation position higher under normal occupancy. At minimum occupancy, the normal ventilation setting will suffice.
- Let your ventilation system start earlier and end later than normal (e.g. two hours before and after working hours).
- For indoor climate systems in which air is recirculated, we advise you to contact your installer. One can see whether additional measures are necessary to prevent any virus droplets from entering via recirculation.
- Should you ventilate your building in a natural way, we advise you to ventilate more frequently than normal. An open window works wonders.

To be on the safe side, we would also like to draw attention to toilet use, so that the spread of the coronavirus in faeces particles via the air is also prevented. Tell your employees to close the toilet lid before flushing. Ventilation of the toilet area is also important.

Many business premises are (partly) used less due to government measures. When hot water is stopped for a long time because taps are no longer flushed, there is a risk of legionella contamination. Make sure your workplace remains safe by applying preventive measures against legionella.

### **Safety and stress**

The NVAB (The Netherlands Society of Occupational Medicine) warns that work-related stress factors lead to a reduction in concentration and the ability to make decisions. Under stress, employees are more easily distracted, have reduced memory, and an increase in doubt. The increased stress of the corona crisis can affect safety behaviour on the work floor and lead to unsafe actions there. Particularly for high-risk tasks, such as working at heights, maintenance work, driving a forklift or operating machinery, it is known that increased work-related stress leads to an increase in the number of accidents.

### **Personal protective equipment**

In general, wearing personal protective equipment has no added value in situations where they were not used before the coronavirus either. However, we see that policy changes occur under the influence of social pressure. Wearing mouth masks or gloves by staff that is not

trained in this does not have a protective effect. Without careful instruction and training, these means lead to a bigger spread because they are often not used properly. Wearing gloves for prolonged periods is also harmful to the skin. From June 1, 2020, the government will make non-medical mouth masks compulsory in public transport, explicitly because it has no other choice there. It is not possible to keep a distance of 1.5 metres, there is prolonged contact in an enclosed space, and a screening questionnaire cannot be used. The medical, scientific basis for wearing non-medical mouth masks is thin. The government has given instructions on non-medical mouth masks, such as how to make them, that they should only be worn for three hours, a clean mouth mask before each trip, and washing them at 60 degrees Celsius after use. These mouth masks only protect the transfer from you to others and not the other way around.

### **Hygiene measures**

Inform employees about personal hygiene measures:

- Touch the eyes, nose, and mouth as little as possible.
- Cough and sneeze on the inside of the elbow and use paper tissues only. Discard them immediately after use.
- Provide resources for good hand hygiene:
  - Regularly wash hands with water and soap and dry with disposable paper towels. Call attention to the washing instructions of the RIVM.
  - Use hand alcohol with moisturiser if there is no possibility to wash your hands.
- Post reminder notices at the entrance, lunchrooms, and toilets.
- Clean contact surfaces with regular cleaning products several times a day: handles, handrails, light switches, lift buttons, counters, tools, keyboards, computer mice, telephones, taps, soap holders, sinks, toilets, etc.
- Be mindful when washing tableware and cutlery with water and soap; preferably use high temperature in the dishwasher.

### **Social distancing**

You have to reduce the number of contacts and increase the distance between people (social distancing). You can find measures to apply social distancing below. These government measures change regularly.

- Avoid touching if possible, and do not shake hands.
- Limit meetings in time, frequency, and numbers.
- Work in different rooms of an available building.
- Spread your opening hours and the hours that people work and take breaks.
- Limit travel movements.
- Use the lift with no more than two people at the same time and encourage stair climbing.
- Schedule meetings as online, video conferencing or by phone.
- Cancel all events or allow them to continue without an audience.
- Talk to employees in non-critical positions, such as interns, about their presence.

## Part 4: Working from home

### Working from home

The government has clearly proclaimed that working from home is still the norm for the whole of the Netherlands. Working from home must be possible for (the position of) the employee and the support from I.T. This concerns software and I.T., but also psychological strain and working from home healthily. You will find more practical tips on working from home healthily with limited resources in our flyer '[Working from home in a healthy and sustainable way.](#)' We can also provide you with tailored advice on working in the new reality.

### Software and IT

Set up manuals for accessing the digital work environment from various devices. If necessary, make additional software available for consultation/collaboration. Make sure your data is safe. This period is very attractive for cybercriminals, so make sure you protect the data of your organisation, employees, and customers. Investigate the possibilities for digital work/education, for example, by using the temporarily free software of Microsoft Teams or Google Meet.

Due to the increase in digital traffic, there are more frequent (small) failures. Realise that this may be due to, among other things, the settings of your employees' own router. By default, routers send on a certain GHz band that may be overloaded. The Consumentenbond has drawn up a step-by-step plan to 'improve Wi-Fi' in your home.

### Science about working from home

There are several uncertainties and misunderstandings about working from home. We know this from research into working from home before the coronavirus appeared:

- The number of people working from home increased from 2.8 million in 2013 to 3.3 million in 2018.
- Employees say they are more productive at home than at work: 70%.
- Employees think that their colleagues are also more productive at home: 54%.
- Employees say they take fewer breaks at home and work longer: 82%.
- Employees who have more autonomy are happier in their work and less often sick.

### Psychological strain when working from home

#### Lack of social contacts

One of the most frequently heard complaints of people who work from home for a longer period or for whom working from home is not their own choice is the lack of social contacts and a loss of connection. Some people even experience a considerable degree of social isolation. They can feel lonely and even experience emotional complaints, such as gloominess or depression.

Social support (from colleagues and the manager) is an important source of energy at work. Social support involves several things. It is the appreciation you get from your manager, but

also the help a colleague offers when you are struggling with a problem. It is the sociability that people experience in the workplace. This source of energy is largely lost when social interaction in the workplace is lost. The new technology can make up for a lot. Stay connected by using alternative means of communication, such as video calls for meetings and WhatsApp groups.

### **Blurring: the boundary between home and work blurs**

If the work domain invades the private domain, this can lead to 'blurring.' The boundary between one's private life and work becomes blurred. No psychological distance can be taken from work, and private life loses its function of rest and recovery. Being 'on' continuously ensures that employees do not get a distance from (the worries about) work. The head remains alert, and the body continues to produce stress hormones, and both head and body can then disturb the night's rest. Blurring can be prevented by sharply drawing the line when and where you work. For example, do not take work to where you relax. Eventually, you will make the link between this place and the stress you can experience from work.

### **Overcompensation**

Working from home reduces the visibility of the work. Employees are no longer physically present for 8 hours. This can feel liberating because employees can arrange their own time, but it also has a downside. If an employee closes one's laptop at home at 5 p.m., no one has seen that one has actually worked a full day. Nobody wants to be seen as someone who cuts corners, so people tend to work more hours. This can sometimes take on extreme forms, when employees call and e-mail each other until late in the evening, putting further pressure on the work-life balance. Managers have an essential role to play here.

### **Ergonomics: setting up a home office**

Not everyone has a furnished office workplace at home. For example, employees work with their laptops at the kitchen dining table for a long time. This might go well for a while, but it can cause neck and shoulder complaints. The foundation of a good working posture is: the upper legs are supported, and the feet are well on the floor (or an elevation), the back is straight, the forearms are leaning on good armrests or the worktop, and the top of the monitor is slightly below eye level. Download [our tips \(pdf\)](#) or let an expert look at the settings of the (home) workplace of employees via our online (home) workplace check.

If necessary, make an inventory of whether your employee has the right resources to work from home. If your employees need their own materials to set up the home office, consider moving them (or having them moved) to the employee's home. You could think of an office chair, footstool, separate keyboard, etc.

### **The legislation on working from home**

Under the Working Conditions Act, the employer must include every workplace in its working conditions policy. Including the home workplace. As an employer, you must check whether the home workplace is, for example, ergonomically set up. However, in this case, it is a special situation. Working from home is advised by the government to contain the coronavirus, and it is not the choice of employer or employee. Although you must comply with this as an employer, it cannot be expected that every organisation immediately has the right equipment for everyone, or has checked that all employees have good workplaces.

However, the employer's duty of care still applies. So, [share tips for setting up a good home workplace](#) or use our online (home) workplace check.

### **Move**

On average, seventy per cent of the Dutch do not meet the movement standard in normal times (before the corona measures). Now that people can no longer go to the gym/sports club and work from home more than ever, it is important to encourage employees to keep moving. By exercising more, people feel fitter, more productive, more relaxed, less stressed, and less tired. This also has a positive effect on the immune system.

Continuing to move while working from home can be done in different ways. Alternate between sitting and moving every half hour. Get a glass of water, a cup of coffee, make a phone call while walking around, do a few stretching exercises. Anything to loosen up the muscles. Use the break to take a walk (keep a distance of one and a half meters).

### **Daily rhythm**

Working from home can be an attack on normal work rhythm and social life. Treat the days as normal working days. So, shower and get dressed, set boundaries for family members or housemates, take a breath of fresh air during breaks, and follow the working day as much as possible. The latter means that you should also take time for breaks and preferably mark a moment as the end of the working day. Do not work in the evenings, but deliberately make time for relaxation, so that you also get a good night's sleep. If desired, do a relaxation/mindfulness exercise before bedtime. It is important to be able to recover from the day.



## Appendix 1 Questionnaire example: coronavirus

You have an appointment with us. Because of the coronavirus pandemic, we would like to ask you some questions. These questions are meant for **you but also for your housemates**:

1. Do **you and/or one of your housemates** currently suffer from:
  - a. Fever (above 38.0 degrees Celsius) Yes/No
  - b. Sneezing and/or rhinitis Yes/No
  - c. Coughing and/or shortness of breath Yes/No
  - d. Loss of smell and/or taste Yes/No
  - e. Sore throat Yes/No
  - f. Newly developed nausea and/or diarrhoea Yes/No
  
2. Are you in home isolation now? Yes/No
  
3. Have you had the coronavirus/COVID-19 in the last 3 weeks? Yes/No  
And are you free of complaints for less than 3 days? Yes/No

If you answer one of these questions with **'yes'**, we would like to ask you to schedule your appointment at another time.

If you have any doubts about your health, please contact us in advance.

## Appendix 2 Mourning protocol example

Focus area	Actions	Who
Notification of death	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Check if the message is correct.</li> </ul>	Manager
Inform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decide how, where, and when the news is brought.</li> <li>Inform and care for managers and close colleagues.</li> <li>Instruct department how to act if someone calls for the deceased employee.</li> <li>Draft letter of condolence and obituary.</li> <li>Inform the H.R. department concerning registration, communication, payroll administration, occupational health and safety service, etc.</li> </ul>	Manager Supervisor
Contact with next of kin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contact next of kin.</li> <li>Send flowers and cards</li> </ul>	Supervisor
Organisational adjustments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cancel the deceased's appointments.</li> <li>Review current affairs for priority.</li> <li>Arrange for work to be taken over.</li> <li>Communicate to customers.</li> <li>Delete account, authorisations, and e-mail address.</li> <li>Hand over personal belongings to the family.</li> </ul>	Supervisor
Between death and funeral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organise the possibility of condolence in the form of an (online) register.</li> <li>Inform staff about the date of the funeral.</li> <li>Deliver a flower arrangement.</li> <li>Set up a memorial place.</li> </ul>	Supervisor
Funeral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attend the funeral remotely (if possible) or look back at the funeral together at a later moment.</li> <li>Care for colleagues.</li> </ul>	Supervisor
Practical matters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If applicable, pay out financial plans/apply shortfall scheme (ANW-hiaatverzekering).</li> <li>Formal termination of employment.</li> <li>Administrative completion.</li> </ul>	H.R.
Aftercare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide aftercare to employees if necessary.</li> </ul>	Company social work
Recruitment and selection upon resulting vacancy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attention to the position of the new employee who fills the vacant position.</li> </ul>	Supervisor
Attention for special days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Date of death one year later: Send card or flowers to next of kin.</li> </ul>	Supervisor