

COVID-19

Information for UK fashion and textile companies on the outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19), including how to prepare your business, with guidance on supply chains, sales, factories and key workers.

UKFT urges all companies to consider some of the issues they may face over the coming weeks and months, and prepare for any disruption the outbreak may cause by developing contingency plans and issuing the necessary communication with both their employees and clients.

Check the guidelines and protocols suggested by the World Health Organisation (WHO) at www.who.int and any local /national public health authorities about containing and mitigating against any further spread of the virus.

Symptoms of COVID-19

The symptoms of Coronavirus/ COVID-19 are similar to other illnesses, especially “the flu” but the degree of severity will vary from one person to another. It is believed that most people who contract COVID-19 will recover but older people or those with underlying health issues (such as diabetes or asthma or those having suffered a heart attack) are at far greater risk.

The main symptoms are:

- Cough
- Temperature
- Sore throat
- Shortness of breath

If you have fever, cough and or difficulty breathing, seek medical care early.

Contact NHS Direct on 111 in the UK or a local health care provider (dial 112 in the EU) if you have travelled in an area where COVID-19 has been reported, or if you have been in close contact with someone with who has respiratory symptoms, if you have symptoms or suspect you may have the disease. The **recommended self-quarantine period is at least 14 days**. Isolate yourself. Do not go to your GP practice, pharmacy or a hospital unless instructed to do so by a qualified healthcare professional.

Why? Whenever you have fever, cough and difficulty breathing, it is important to seek medical attention promptly as this may be due to a respiratory infection or other serious

condition. Respiratory symptoms with fever can have a range of causes, and depending on your personal travel history and circumstances, COVID-19 could be one of them.

Infection Control Guidelines (adapted from the WHO site):

The World Health Organisation's standard recommendations for the general public to reduce exposure to and transmission of a range of illnesses are as follows, which include hand and "respiratory" hygiene, and safe food practices:

Wash your hands frequently

Wash your hands frequently with soap and hot water and/or use an alcohol-based hand rub even if your hands are not visibly dirty. This is especially important after travelling on public transport, on arrival at home or work.

Why? Washing your hands with soap and hot water or using alcohol-based hand rub eliminates the virus if it is on your hands.

Cough or sneeze into your elbow (aka practicing "respiratory hygiene")

When coughing and sneezing, cover mouth and nose with flexed elbow or tissue – discard tissue immediately into a closed bin and clean your hands with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and hot water.

Why? Covering your mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing prevent the spread of germs and viruses. If you sneeze or cough into your hands, you may contaminate objects or people that you touch.

Maintain social distancing

Maintain at least 1 metre (3 feet) distance between yourself and other people, particularly those who are coughing, sneezing and have a fever. Note: In the fashion industry, it is customary for people to hug and kiss, or shake hands. You would need to refrain from this kind of contact in the case of an outbreak.

Why? When someone who is infected with a respiratory disease, like COVID-19, coughs or sneezes they project small droplets containing the virus. If you are too close, you can breathe in the virus.

Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth

Why? Hands touch many surfaces which can be contaminated with the virus. If you touch your eyes, nose or mouth with your contaminated hands, you can transfer the virus from the surface to yourself.

Keep the following especially clean:

- Keyboards
- Mobile phones
- Ipads
- Credit cards
- Keys
- Remote controls
- Door handles

Prepare your business

Businesses owners/directors should review their own procedures to ensure that they are prepared for an outbreak which might affect their supply chain or the safety of their working environment.

For the supply chain – these will include:

- Identifying areas of supply or production which could be affected, for example product which is only available from China. Monitor the delay, bearing in mind that Chinese factories may not be able to reopen as quickly as they might like and that key workers may still face quarantine issues.
- Identifying potential areas for diversifying sources of supplies
- Liaising with customers to advise them whether there may be delays
- Factory owners will need to consult their own insurances and Company Handbooks/insurance policies to see how they are covered/affected by any outbreak or decision to close the factory

For sales, these may include:

- Key buyers may not wish to travel for appointments or to trade fairs – devise alternative routes to communicate with them and follow up on sales with online resources (look books or linesheets images, price lists, video presentations etc)
- Key company workers may not wish to travel to affected areas or tradeshows – consider whether you are insured for this and what needs to happen. Ensure you have adequate insurance for all workers travelling on company business.
- Make better use of video conferencing rather than team meetings if this is appropriate

For your office/factory/working these may include:

- Providing alcohol rub/anti-bacterial soaps, hot water and disposable paper towel where necessary – especially as people enter/leave the building

- Making staff aware of hygiene issues in the work place
- Updating contact lists for personnel including their home and mobile numbers in case you need to contact them urgently
- Having a contingency plan to enable workers to log in to computers or work from home if possible and if required
- Informing staff that they should not come into work and self-quarantine for 14 days if they genuinely believe they have come into contact with someone who may have been infected or, if they have symptoms, until those symptoms have completely cleared and they are no longer infectious.
- In the case of confirmed infections, require all staff to show that they have been given a clean bill of health once the virus has cleared
- Factory owners will need to consider whether it safe for their factories to remain open, how to keep workers healthy and safe

Key workers may also suffer other issues relating to the outbreak, including:

- Sick family members requiring care or isolation
- Childcare responsibilities if schools or childcare facilities are forced to close
- Difficulties accessing basic supplies

Wherever possible, anticipate problems before they occur and promote a positive, clean, flexible and safe working environment.

How to self –monitor

If you are required to self-monitor, you should look out for symptoms such as fever, cough or sore throat and lethargy. If you experience any of these symptoms you should immediately self-isolate and follow the advice below.

How to self-isolate

If there's a chance you could have Coronavirus, you may be asked by a medical professional to stay away from other people (self-isolate).

This means you should:

- stay at home
- not go to work, school or public places
- not use public transport or taxis
- ask friends, family members or delivery services to do errands for you
- try to avoid visitors to your home – it's OK for friends, family or delivery drivers to drop off food

You may need to do this for up to 14 days to help reduce the possible spread of infection.

Treatment for Coronavirus

There is currently no specific treatment for Coronavirus.

Antibiotics do not help, as they do not work against viruses.

Treatment aims to relieve the symptoms while your body fights the illness.

You'll need to stay in isolation away from other people until you've recovered.

Resources

Public Health England: [Latest information and advice](#)

Public Health England: [Specified countries and areas impacted](#)

Foreign & Commonwealth Office: [Travel Advice](#)

NHS: [Common questions about the virus](#)

World Health Organization: [Technical Guidance on Points of Entry and Mass Gatherings](#)

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