# Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

**POLICY STATEMENT**

National is committed quality infection control measure, to safeguard employees, clients and the general public from further exposure from Coronavirus.

**SCOPE**

This policy applies to all *National* employees and is in addition to the *National Community Care Infection Control Policy.*

**BACKGROUND**

Coronavirus also known as COVID-19 is a new strain of the Coronavirus family (CoV) which generally cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV). The novel coronavirus (nCoV) is a new strain that has not been previously identified in humans and has reached pandemic proportions.

**POLICY**

National are committed to ensuring we operate in line with Federal and Territory restrictions and recommendations. In addition to this, National have implemented that all employees have access to appropriate training and safety equipment as a measure of safety to minimise the spread of community transmission.

**Common signs of infection include**

(1) *Respiratory symptoms,*
(2) *Fever,*
(3) *Cough,*
(4) *Shortness of breath and breathing difficulties,*
(5) *In more severe cases, infection can cause pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome, kidney failure and even death.*

**Standard recommendations to prevent infection spread include:**

1) *Regular hand washing,*
2) *Covering mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing,*
3) *Social distancing 1.5 meters from other persons,*
4) *When instructed by department of health; wear a mask,*
5) *Thoroughly cooking meat and eggs,*
6) *Avoid close contact with anyone showing symptoms of respiratory illness such as coughing and sneezing.*

**Notification to National if unwell or known contact with someone diagnosed with Corona Virus:**

- If employees have been in close contact with a person who has returned a positive test for the virus, including within a secondary workplace.
- If employees are self-isolating.

- Any employee that has returned from travel within any of the identified affected countries and National 'Hot-spots' should self-quarantine at home for 14 days after leaving the high-risk location as per the recommendations from ACT Health.
- In the event, an employee is unsure if they are at risk, the ACT Health Screening Tool can be utilised: https://screening.covid19.act.gov.au/user
- Employees exhibiting similar signs of the COVID-19 infection are required (under Territory recommendation) to undertake COVID-19 testing and notify National immediately.
- Employee is required to self-isolate until COVID-19 results determine a negative result. In the event the result is negative, the employee requires a "Fit to return" certificate from their GP to recommence working duties with National.
- All clients/participants are requested to disclose to National if any of the above-mentioned criteria is relevant to them or their immediate household.

**Mandatory Reporting**

National is required by law to report any self-isolation incidents and or diagnosed cases of the virus to the Disease Surveillance Unit who is responsible for the coordination of the ACT Communicable Diseases Surveillance Program.

Furthermore, the usual mandatory reporting requirements are implemented to relevant agencies such as NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission, Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission, Public Trustee and Guardianship.

**National Community Safety Action Plan**

National have developed and implemented a COVID-19 Safety Action Plan specific to care delivery and services within the community setting for employees. The plan implements National's current policies including Work Health and Safety, Outbreak Procedure, Infection Control, Mandatory Reporting and Mandatory Training.

A copy of the action plan will be made available to staff on request.

**Reference**

https://screening.covid19.act.gov.au/user
https://health.act.gov.au/about-our-health-system/population-health/disease-surveillance
https://www.health.act.gov.au/public-health-alert/updated-information-about-covid-19
https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019

# Infection Control Policy

**POLICY STATEMENT**

National is committed to fostering a culture of safe care practices including effective infection prevention and control.

Employees are required to understand the rationale and comply with the responsibility to maintain high standards of infection prevention and control at all times to ensure the safety of those being cared for and staff and visitors in the care environment.

**SCOPE**

This policy applies to all *National* employees.

**POLICY**

Standard infection prevention and control precautions are the basic infection prevention and control measures necessary to reduce the risk of transmission of micro-organisms from recognised and unrecognised sources of infection.

The standard precautions to be implemented by employee's as a critical part of their practice, in order to reduce the risk of infection, transmission and environmental contamination from micro-organisms from recognised and unrecognised sources and so protecting themselves, patients and others from the risk of infection.

**Employee responsibilities**

- To maintain mandatory training and remain accountable for infectious control measures
- Carrying out their duties in a responsible manner consistent with instructions given in relation to health and safety.
- Using equipment provided for health and safety purposes.
- Assisting with the maintenance of a clean and safe environment.
- Strict adherence to policies and procedures that guide work performance to prevent the spread of infection, including following Standard Precautions at all times in the workplace.
- Notifying National should their infection status pose any risk to clients, client or co-workers.
- Notify National should the employee have been in contact with a person or persons with an infectious disease / virus.
- National strongly encourages employees to contact the manager should they be unwell prior to a rostered shift to discuss infection control measures and or cancellation of shift due to being unfit for work.
- Maintaining recommended personal immunisation levels including influenza
- Maintaining a high standard of personal hygiene and grooming
- To utilise PPE correctly and washing of hands
- Cleaning of any spills safely and appropriately – food, drink, body fluids, chemicals
- Employees are to utilise additional precautions as indicated by local infection control policy and as appropriate and clinically indicated in the care setting.

**National responsibilities**

- Provide information, instruction, training, guidance and supervision to all staff to ensure that safe work practices are carried out to minimise the spread of infection, e.g. hand-washing, and standard precautions as well as other special procedures as appropriate.
- Maintain an awareness of new vaccines becoming available to protect staff and to initiate procedures to ensure that those at risk are fully vaccinated.
- Ensure that all staff are informed about the rights and responsibilities of the clients or clients.
- Maintain the confidentiality of medical information.
- Provide access to counseling services for those staff who may become anxious about their health as a result of exposure to a potential hazard (whether true or perceived).
- Support the principles of anti-discrimination in relation to issues concerning the health status of staff, clients and visitors. (The law recognises that certain discrimination may be necessary - it is unnecessary discrimination, which offends the law).

**Standard Precautions**

Standard precautions include:-

- Effective hand hygiene practices
- Maintenance of skin integrity
- The appropriate use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Safe management of blood and body fluid spillages
- Safe use, disposal and management of sharps
- Appropriate cleaning/decontamination of equipment
- Maintaining a clean environment
- Safe waste management
- Safe handling and laundering of used linen.
- Maintaining social distancing where possible

**Personal Protective Equipment**

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) refers to clothing, equipment, and/or substances which, when worn or used correctly, protect part or all of the body from foreseeable risks of injury or disease at work or in the workplace.

- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) will be used when other control measures are not practicable, as determined by a risk assessment.
- Records detailing the PPE identified and chosen for a task and when workers were told about it must be kept on file.
- Employee representatives will be consulted in the selection and purchase of PPE.
- All staff will be trained regarding the use of PPE.
- All Personal Protective Equipment will be provided by the employer (except standard footwear) and should fit properly, be comfortable and easy to put on and take off. Notify the Work Health and Safety Representative of any concerns.
- All PPE will be selected in accordance with the identified need/s and comply with the Australian Standards.

**Descriptions and examples of use of PPE:**

**Hand Protection** (refer to the Australian Standards to determine the type of gloves required for the task):

- When likely to contact any bodily fluid/s;
- When handling contaminated/infected waste;

- When cleaning bathrooms/basins/toilets;
- When emptying waste/garbage bins;
- When handling chemicals;
- When handling hot pots/pans, etc. (use mitts or gauntlets;
- When hand-washing dishes;

**Respirator Protection**

(refer to the Australian Standards 1715 and 1716 to select the appropriate respiratory device/s): When coming into contact with harmful dust, fumes, vapours, gasses.

- ***Clothing -*** *When at risk of contact with body fluids (e.g. disposable apron).*

**REFERENCES**

Work Health and Safety Act 2011
Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011

ACT Health Manual Handling Policy accessed from
https://www.health.act.gov.au/sites/default/files/Manual%20Handling%20Policy.pdf  6/5/2018

National Code of Practice August 2007 For the Prevention of Musculo-skeletal Disorders from Performing Manual Handling Tasks at Work accessed from
https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/system/files/documents/1702/nationalcodeofpractice_preventionofmusculoskeletaldisordersfromperformingmanualtasksatwork_2007_pdf.pdf 6/5/2018

Standards Australia AS/NZS ISO 31000:2009 Risk management – Principles and guidelines accessed from Risk management Australian/New Zealand Standard AS/NZS 4360: 1999 Standards Australia on 6 /5/2018

Work Health and Safety, (2011), A Practical Guide to Implementing Work Health and Safety in Cliental Aged Care, AGPS, Canberra.

World Health Organisation - https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241516945
ACT Health - https://www.health.gov.au/resources/apps-and-tools/covid-19-infection-control-training