



Live Well, Work Well

Health and wellness tips for your work, home and life—brought to you by the insurance professionals at Robertson Ryan & Associates



Working From Home During a Coronavirus Outbreak

For many, working from home is just the daily routine. For people unfamiliar with remote work, it can take some getting used to.

During a coronavirus outbreak, some workers may be forced to work from home when they otherwise wouldn't. This article discusses why preventive measures like working remotely are so important during outbreaks and provides tips for successfully working from home.

What Is a Coronavirus?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), coronaviruses are common in animal species, and most don't affect humans. As of now, only seven different coronaviruses are known to infect humans, one of which causes the flu. Common coronaviruses typically cause mild to moderate upper-respiratory tract illness, and those affected exhibit cold-like symptoms.

However, the most recent coronavirus is causing a more serious disease known as COVID-19. This is not the first time a coronavirus has been deadly—both the SARS and MERS outbreaks were caused by coronaviruses.

Why Is Working Remotely Important During an Outbreak?

Viruses and other diseases spread more rapidly when there are lots of people together. Workplaces often have many shared surfaces and objects that can infect

many people in a short period of time.

Proper prevention methods like washing hands thoroughly and avoiding close contact can help, but they sometimes aren't enough to curb infections. In more serious cases, like that of the COVID-19 pandemic, organizations may ask that employees work from home or may suspend operations entirely.

Isolating workers from one another helps prevent the entire organization and its customers from being infected.

How Can I Prevent a Coronavirus Infection?

Most common cases of coronavirus occur in the fall and the winter, but can happen at any time throughout the year—especially during a pandemic. Unfortunately, there is not a vaccine that can protect you from a human coronavirus infection. However, because human coronaviruses are believed to be spread through person-to-person contact, the CDC recommends the following prevention strategies:

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid contact with those who are sick.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water.



Follow these tips when at work, at home and in public. Consistently following these prevention methods is your best defense against infection.

How Can I Ensure My Home Is Disinfected?

Just because you're working from home doesn't mean you're automatically safe from infection—isolation merely lowers the potential of it rapidly spreading. This means you should ensure your house and remote working space is sufficiently disinfected.

Here are some tips for keeping your space clean:

- Use cleaning products that say “disinfectant” on the label. Some even advertise their effectiveness against coronaviruses specifically.
- Clean commonly touched surfaces and objects, like door handles, toilet flushers, countertops, desks, pens, computer mice and phones.
- Be sure to read cleaning product labels and follow proper instructions, like waiting a certain amount of time before wiping the cleaner off.
- Sanitize dishes with specific dishwasher cycles or with food-grade products. After sanitizing, be sure to rinse with water any surfaces and objects that will come into contact with food.

These cleaning tips aren't a replacement for other prevention methods. Be sure to continue washing your hands thoroughly and to avoid large groups of people.

What Are Some Tips for Effectively Working Remotely?

If you're not used to working from home, or if you struggle to stay productive in your own space, here are some tips for getting the most out of a remote workday:

- Choose a designated work area, such as a kitchen table. Trying to work from your bed or couch can be challenging, since such locations are associated with sleep and relaxation.
- Plan and test communications. Testing remote communications might not be possible for last-minute remote work, but you should still know your options for contacting co-workers.
- Dress like you're going into work. Your clothing can have a significant psychological effect on your performance. If you wear lounge pants and

a T-shirt, you're less likely to be as productive as you would be wearing a business-casual outfit.

- Limit distractions. Working from home takes trust from both management and employees, so be sure to avoid browsing the internet or other activities not related to work. Sitting close to a window or near a TV can also invite distractions, so pick your work area accordingly.
- Take breaks when you need to. Just because you're working from home doesn't mean you can't take breaks. Make sure you're not spending more time at your workstation than you typically would in the workplace.
- Stay aware of your productivity. Working from home takes some getting used to. As you work, keep note of aspects you can improve and how your employer may be able to help. For instance, you might notice your choice of workspace is too distracting so you need to move, or you might realize you could use another monitor for your computer. If something you typically use in the workplace would aid you at home, be sure to tell your employer.

It's important to stay in close contact with your supervisor to ensure you have everything you need to be successful when working from home and also reach out with questions about your company's working from home policy.