

# Criteria for qualifying COVID-19 as an occupational illness

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Recently, the Mexican Social Security Institute issued criteria for determining in what cases infection with Coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) should be considered an occupational illness.

According to those criteria, first the risk of exposure of the employees should be classified in four levels, depending on the repeated or extended contact with possible sources of contagion:

- a) **Very high** risk of exposure: Healthcare personnel participating directly in providing care for patients with suspected or confirmed coronavirus, and those in contact with materials or surfaces contaminated by SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19).
- b) **High** risk of exposure: Healthcare personnel who do not participate directly in providing care for patients with suspected or confirmed coronavirus, nor are in contact with materials or surfaces contaminated by SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19), but who are likely to have had direct contact.
- c) **Medium** risk of exposure:
  - Personnel who participate directly in providing care to the general public, have frequent contact with other employees or are at greater risk of making contact with contaminated materials and surfaces.
  - Healthcare team workers who provide care for problems unrelated to SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19).
  - Workers who have frequent social contact without personal protection equipment and multiple interactions with different individuals or groups who collaborate in activities such as: preparation and serving of food and beverages, public administration and social security services, temporary housing services, financial and insurance services, personal services in the home and transportation services.
- d) **Low** risk of exposure: Personnel who do not participate directly in providing services to the general public, but whose essential activity has a greater risk of infection or contact with materials or surfaces contaminated by SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) than those who provide services to the general public.

It is also necessary for a worker to have had contact with a person confirmed or suspected of infection with SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19), in addition to having a level of risk of exposure when performing work activities, to be certified under a probable occupational illness.

In other words, it will be certified that SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) is an occupational illness if the following requirements are met:

- a) That the worker meets the criteria of a suspect or confirmed case through public or private laboratories of the National Public Health Laboratories Network.
- b) That the worker meets the criteria of personnel occupationally exposed.

- c) That there is a latency period of 1 to 14 days between the labor contact or exposure and the initiation of the clinical presentation in the worker, and identifying that such exposure occurred before the suspension of work, for non-essential activities, or that, even with the suspension, the workplace continued operating without being an essential activity.
- d) That it is shown that the worker was exposed while working or because of work to a person with SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) and the exposure outside of work is minimal.

We think the information provided is relevant for properly addressing any emergency or suspected case in the workplace. We will continue to follow this matter and keep you informed of any developments.

To obtain additional information contact our experts:

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Mexico City, May 4, 2020.

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