

Working with COVID

COVID-19 cases are holding steady or declining in some states and increasing in others, which may create anxiety to those returning to the office. Reintroduction into the office can create COVID-related safety concerns, or adjustment-related concerns similar to those after returning from a deployment. It may take time to adjust - so as you return to the workplace here are some tips to consider for staying alert, healthy and mission-focused:



- **Keep your distance.** Remember the ‘6-foot rule,’ and when you can’t, mask up! Though you may be excited to see officemates again, refrain from handshakes and hugs.
- **Pack the essentials.** Bring masks, hand sanitizers, disinfectant wipes, and gloves. Sanitize your hands regularly and frequently, and refrain from touching your face. Don’t forget to sanitize your work space, phones, and surfaces in high-use areas.
- **Bring your own meals and cutlery.** If it’s good enough for last night’s dinner, it’s good enough for lunch the next day. This is an easy way to spend less, better control food portions, and limit person-to-person germ spreading.
- **Support your immunity.** Eat nutritious foods and take a multivitamin to support your body’s natural defenses.
- **Stay physically fit.** The benefits are numerous, in addition to keeping off the ‘COVID-19’ weight gain. Even simple exercise strengthens heart and lung functions. Take the stairs, walk to your appointments, or do some stretches in the office.
- **Stay vigilant.** Tune into your own and others’ health. This is not a period for ignoring sniffles and fevers. Keep a safe distance if someone is coughing and sneezing. Disinfect your work station & work areas often. Stay home if you or loved ones are sick; toughing it out may put your co-workers at risk. If sneezing into a mask is no fun, be proactive and cover your nose & mouth.
- **Hold off on social gatherings.** We’ve all been missing our coworker friends. Hold off on office potlucks and social gatherings. Now is not the time to put yourself and others at risk.
- **Consider telework cost.** Telework has not been a vacation. Connection issues, software incompatibility, and server interfacing has been very challenging. Including parents who did not expect to become homeschool teachers. Telework has not been easy on your peers who maybe haven’t channeled up all of their challenges. Refrain from making jokes that equate telework with “time off”.
- **Prepare a return home routine.** Wash or dispose of your daily mask; wash your hands with warm water and soap ASAP; place work clothes in the laundry; take a shower quickly, and disinfect your keys, phone, and wallet/purse.

COVID-19 has been tough to deal with on many levels. As physical distancing restrictions are lessened and the nation heads “back to the office” in greater numbers, don’t let fear keep you from

productivity. Just as you have modified your social behaviors to limit the spread of this disease, stay sentry-like, vigilant, and maintain your efforts to keep new infections down. As a community, we will get through this difficult period. And if you need further support, your ART is here to assist in the process.