

IBioIC COVID-19 Best Practice Guidelines for Safe Laboratory Working

26 May 2020

Introduction

The Industrial Biotechnology Innovation Centre (IBioIC) has created this document for the purpose of sharing best practice guidelines regarding safe working practices, as well as a combination of risk assessment considerations and control measures from companies in the IBioIC network.

The aim is to reduce the risk of the spreading COVID-19 by implementing procedures and guidelines recommended by the Scottish and UK Governments, and companies in the IBioIC network. While not all these guidelines and control measures may be appropriate, it is essential for all employers to carry out specific site risk assessments to evaluate what control measures are needed and consider the views and suggestions of staff. It is important that workplaces are safe before staff return to work. IBioIC has included checklists in this document for employees returning to work and a self-declaration questionnaire for visitors.

In line with the Scottish Government's publication [Scotland's route map through and out of the crisis](#) (21 May 2020) it is envisaged at time of writing that during Phase 1 that work places where research is conducted should be prepared for reopening through the implementation of appropriate control measures. Resumption of the operation of research facilities can then occur in Phase 2 with appropriate measures in place. This is subject to change.

Guidelines for social distancing in labs

- Work from home where possible.
- On-site personnel restricted to staff members essential for completion of work, approved by facility manager.
- Where social distancing cannot be followed, it should be considered whether the activity is critical for business operations. If so, implement appropriate control measures (masks/visors).
- Implement staggered working hours where possible to reduce contact.
- Implement staggered arrival and departure times.
- Create a register of staff on-site upon arrival to identify incidents of proximity.
- All meetings to be conducted via teleconference.
- Implement floor markings in corridors and lab spaces as appropriate to ensure staff members stay at least 2 metres apart. Consider establishing and signalling a 1-way system where this is possible. Staff members may stay less than 2 metres apart where the completion of the task is business critical, and appropriate control measures are put in place (masks/visors) (see Appendix for examples).
- Appoint a maximum number of people in any workspace or communal area.
- Implement a dedicated entrance and exit to buildings and work areas where possible.
- Use entrances and exits direct to the outside where appropriate, especially for external staff.

Guidelines for social distancing in office areas

- Implement a division between workspaces/desks with temporary Perspex screens/barriers. where proper social distancing is not possible.
- Back-to-back or side-to-side working arrangements encouraged instead of face-to-face where proper social distancing is not possible.
- Reduce contact between people by assigning fixed teams of partnering.
- Assess individual staff members' vulnerability.
- Use radios/telephones for communication where possible.

Guidelines for social distancing in rest and change areas

- Implement staggered break times.
- Encourage use of outdoor break areas.
- Encourage staff to bring their own food to avoid opening canteen areas.
- Reconfigure break room layout to reduce close contact.
- Implement arrangements for toilet areas, showers or changing rooms where applicable.
- If any staff member feels unwell the correct protocol is to stay home, contact health services and inform line manager.
- Social distancing rules may be broken in an emergency (e.g. chemical spill, fire, or when first aid is required).

Guidelines for visitors

- Minimise the number of visitors and reduce visitation times.
- Prepare self-declaration forms for visitors, issue these in advance and maintain in records, prepare instructions for arrival and prearrange a meeting point, ideally outside.
- Use entrances and exits direct to the outside where possible to reduce interactions with others.
- Designate a meeting area for visitors with appropriate safety equipment, personal hygiene equipment, conduct self-declaration questionnaire here if not previously completed.
- Provide clear guidance to visitors on social distancing in the facility.

Guidelines for personal hygiene practices

- Hand washing on entry and exit, frequent hand washing throughout following hand washing guidance: at least 20 seconds with soap and water (see Appendix for hand washing guidance).
- Sanitisation with alcohol hand gel upon entry and exit, frequent hand sanitisation throughout stay, especially when going between laboratory and office spaces.
- Place visual reminders around facility to wash hands and use hand sanitiser.
- Place hand sanitiser in all areas of the workplace and at entrance and exit.
- Observe respiratory hygiene practices: cough/sneeze into bent elbow or tissue, dispose of tissue immediately after use.
- Where proper social distancing is not possible, use face masks/visors as well as usual PPE in confined spaces.

Guidelines for cleaning

- More frequent cleaning of all work areas with usual cleaning products (detergents and disinfectants to maintain usual cleanliness).
- Additional use of 70% alcohol solution spray and wipe.
- Frequently used equipment to be sanitised after each use ensuring power is off where possible.
- Frequently used surfaces to be cleaned after each use.
- Servicing/adjustment of ventilation system.
- Provide more frequent rubbish collection and more waste disposal facilities.
- Provide paper towels instead of hand dryers.
- Implement procedures for cleaning new equipment when entering the facility.
- Implement procedures for receipting and unpacking consumables, considering all surfaces as dirty and cleaned appropriately.
- Restriction of non-business deliveries (no personal deliveries for staff members).

Guidelines for the journey to work

- Staff encouraged not to use public transport.
- If public transport is necessary, staff encouraged to travel outside of rush hours. Where this cannot be avoided, staff to ensure they follow social distancing and being mindful of touching common surfaces and touching face or mobile phones before washing hands.

Guidelines for mental health support

- Management to promote mental health awareness and offer whatever support they can.

Employee returning to work checklist

Employee name	Job title
Employee contact number	Date
Signature	

Tick	Guidelines
	Practice good personal hygiene at all times including washing hands regularly and using alcohol hand sanitiser gel provided
	Monitor own health and that of your colleagues. If you or a team member feels unwell at work, they should move to an unoccupied room, inform line manager and contact health services
	If you or a team member feels unwell the correct protocol is to stay home, contact health services and inform line manager
	During face-to-face meetings or when working in a lab, stand at least 2 metres apart. If this is not possible use face masks/visors
	If appropriate a schedule for canteen use may be provided to limit the number of persons in the same space. Sit 2 metres apart from any other person when in communal areas
	Avoid congregation of team members in common spaces
	Where available check temperatures upon arrival to work (suggested measure) (see Appendix for suggested method)

Self-declaration questionnaire, information and guidelines and for visitors

Company name	
Visitor name	Visitor contact number
Date	Questionnaire conducted by
Signature (facility manager to sign for visitor to avoid sharing pens)	

Please record information in daily register to assist track and trace.

Tick	Question
	Are you experiencing any symptoms consistent with COVID-19? (fever, persistent dry cough, difficulty breathing, recent loss of taste or smell)
	Are you experiencing any other mild respiratory symptoms?
	Is anyone you live with experiencing any symptoms consistent with COVID-19 or any other mild respiratory symptoms?
	Have you visited any foreign country in the last 14 days?
	Has anyone you live with visited any foreign country in the last 14 days?
	Have you been in contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19?

If you ticked the box for any of these questions you will not be able to visit the facility today and alternative measures need to be made.

When you visit the facility, you will see additional hand sanitising measures in place, including social distancing and instructions on how to wash hands. Please follow these guidelines throughout your visit and use the provided hand sanitiser regularly. Wear personal protective equipment as required in the facility.

In addition, follow good respiratory hygiene by coughing/sneezing into your bent elbow or tissue paper. Please dispose of tissue paper immediately after use.

We ask for your full support with this updated guidance, we all have a shared responsibility to minimise the risk of exposure and protect our individual and collective health.

The self-declaration forms will be used for the purposes of managing the site and will be kept for an appropriate amount of time to comply with regulations.

Please let us know if you have any questions or concerns and thank you for your cooperation.

Appendix: Practical examples of implementing social distancing

Below are example images of ways to implement social distancing measures within a laboratory environment and associated areas within the workplace.

Picture 1: Arrangements for social distancing in laboratories

Seating with 2m side-by-side and back to back where less



Reduced occupancy levels



Source: UK Government Guidelines - Working safely during COVID-19 in labs and research facilities

Picture 2: Arrangements for social distancing in communal areas



Source: UK Government Guidelines - Working safely during COVID-19 in labs and research facilities

Picture 3: Arrangements for social distancing in lifts



Source: UK Government Guidelines - Working safely during COVID-19 in labs and research facilities

Picture 4: Suggested measure non-contact temperature measurement on entry with staff member wearing PPE. This may not be practical or possible in all workplaces but might be considered in work places with high levels of external contractors on site.



Source: IBiolC industry member

Picture 5: Hand washing guidance poster



World Health Organization

Patient Safety

A World Alliance for Safer Health Care

SAVE LIVES

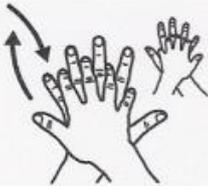
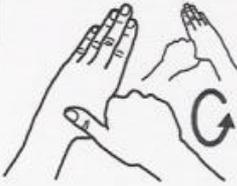
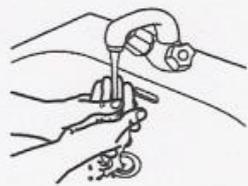
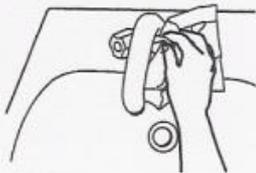
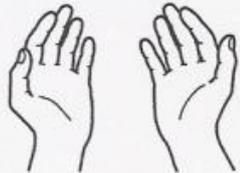
Clean Your Hands

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How to Handwash?

WASH HANDS WHEN VISIBLY SOILED! OTHERWISE, USE HANDRUB

🕒 Duration of the entire procedure: 40-60 seconds

<p>0</p>  <p>Wet hands with water;</p>	<p>1</p>  <p>Apply enough soap to cover all hand surfaces;</p>	<p>2</p>  <p>Rub hands palm to palm;</p>
<p>3</p>  <p>Right palm over left dorsum with interlaced fingers and vice versa;</p>	<p>4</p>  <p>Palm to palm with fingers interlaced;</p>	<p>5</p>  <p>Backs of fingers to opposing palms with fingers interlocked;</p>
<p>6</p>  <p>Rotational rubbing of left thumb clasped in right palm and vice versa;</p>	<p>7</p>  <p>Rotational rubbing, backwards and forwards with clasped fingers of right hand in left palm and vice versa;</p>	<p>8</p>  <p>Rinse hands with water;</p>
<p>9</p>  <p>Dry hands thoroughly with a single use towel;</p>	<p>10</p>  <p>Use towel to turn off faucet;</p>	<p>11</p>  <p>Your hands are now safe.</p>

Source: World Health Organisation