



**NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR
OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH**

CONSEJO NACIONAL DE SALUD Y SEGURIDAD OCUPACIONAL



Covid-19 Delta Alert: Workers Face Deadly Dangers

*The latest info on a dangerous variant --
and steps you can take to make your workplace safer*

The Delta variant virus poses grave dangers to essential workers around the country. Most workplaces have relaxed protections that were in place during the peak of the pandemic. Workers can take the first step to protect themselves, their co-workers and families by getting a vaccine, which is proven to be highly effective at reducing the risk of serious illness and death from COVID.

But vaccines are just the first step, not the only step, in a COVID prevention strategy. All evidence has proved that implementing all possible control methods to reduce worker exposure to people is the most effective way to protect workers and the community. Here are the facts on the dangers of the new Delta variant:

- The Delta variant is **many times more contagious** than the original Covid-19 strain. It's mostly spread by invisible airborne exhalation from an infected person.
- Although vaccinated people are less likely to be seriously ill or die from the variant, new evidence reveals that **breakthrough illnesses in vaccinated individuals are more common and more serious** than previously predicted.¹
- Vaccination alone will not keep workers and the community safe. It's **necessary to have all possible protective measures in place to protect workers** from the spread being caused mostly by the Delta variant. See below for specific controls.
- **Vaccinated people can get infected by the virus and transmit it to others**, even if they don't develop any symptoms, or have relatively mild symptoms. A recent study found that the vaccination protected workers only 66% during the Delta spread vs 91% for the original Covid virus [known as Alpha].²

¹ New York Times, "[What to Know About Breakthrough Infections and the Delta Variant](#)," August 26, 2021

² [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, August 24, 2021](#)

- In many workplaces, workers are **faced with being in contact with both unvaccinated and vaccinated people** from the general public, who are often not taking precautions.
- The Delta variant appears to be **affecting younger age groups with more serious illness**. Since many workers are in this age group, more workers are at grave risk.
- The spread of **Delta virus cases is much worse than reported**. Many people who are infected are not counted in any reports. Over a half of infected people who have the virus **do not** have any symptoms and more do not report an illness if they have mild or modest symptoms. It's been estimated that the actual number of positive cases is ten times what has been reported.

Workplace programs to reduce worker exposure to infectious disease can be very effective in controlling the virus and stopping the spread in workplaces and the community.

Steps to make your workplace safer, Including what you can demand from your boss:

- A written plan
- Training & education
- Masks
- Social distancing
- Ventilation
- Staggered shifts
- Paid sick time
- Regular testing -- at least weekly
- A hazard reporting system.³

³ A full list of resources, control methods and recommendations can be found on the [National COSH website](#)

COVID-19 Questions for Your Workplace

- Is there a comprehensive written plan to evaluate, eliminate or reduce worker exposure to infectious disease hazards that is available to workers for review?
- Are workers involved in the development and implementation of a COVID-19 protection plan?
- Has the employer evaluated all jobs to determine the risk level for exposure to COVID-19?
- Has the employer trained and provided necessary information to workers related to the hazards and prevention methods for COVID-19?
- Has the employer implemented adequate protective measures, such as physical distancing, barriers, and personal protective equipment (PPE) for all workers?
- Is there a process to improve the protective measures currently in place?
- Is there a health and safety committee with at least equal worker representation (chosen by workers, not management) that can follow-up on worker suggestions and complaints?
- Are workers entitled to benefits that are adequate to increase the likelihood that they will stay at home if they have symptoms? These may include but are not limited to paid sick time; employer-paid testing and treatment, and elimination of attendance incentive programs.

Comprehensive Covid controls need to be put in place for every workplace with involvement of workers. If protections are not adequate, workers should consider collective actions to demand improvements. Workers have the right to file a complaint with OSHA/State OSHA if adequate protections from the virus are not in place. Contact National COSH if you need assistance info@nationalcosh.org.