The following procedures are based in sound scientific practice to avoid the spread of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. They are provided as a best practice process to be used as a starting point for workplaces during the current pandemic. They also align with Maine’s statewide checklists for safety and transmission reduction. While the risk of transmission will never be zero, these practices will reduce viral spread.

- SARS-CoV-2 is spread even by individuals who are pre-symptomatic, asymptomatic, or may never exhibit classic symptoms like fever. Therefore, symptom checks like temperature taking have been shown to miss more than 50% of COVID cases, and the best procedures involve proactive precautions by assuming that you may be infected, and others around you may be infected. The incubation period of SARS-CoV-2 is 2–14 days (median of 5 days), with highest viral shedding up to a couple of days prior to symptom onset. Therefore, people are highly contagious before exhibiting any symptoms.

- Maintain social distancing outside of your workplace; if someone has a known interaction with a COVID+ patient, or if you are symptomatic based on the CDC list of symptoms or doctor diagnosis, you must report to supervisor and isolate/quarantine prior to return (the 14-day quarantine is based on the incubation period for this virus).

- Physical distancing of at least 6 feet in workplaces at all times to avoid droplet spread of SARS-CoV-2 (such as from cough, sneeze, close breathing or close talking).
• Use proper PPE (N95 masks, face shields, etc), or face coverings such as cloth masks, especially when around others and unable to maintain distancing. This reduces droplet/aerosol transmission. Cloth masks are preferable now; PPE supplies should be conserved for healthcare workers. Be mindful that surgical masks not providing a tight seal around nose and mouth are not a good barrier.

• Avoid touching your face (virus particles gain entry via mouth, nose, eyes), no hugging/touching other people, use elbow/tissue to cough or sneeze.

• Follow CDC/WHO handwashing procedures (use posted signage), provide hand sanitizer (60%–70% EtOH) when needed (especially when not near a sink). Handwashing with soap for at least 20 seconds is more effective at killing virus than hand sanitizer.

• Stagger work schedules to limit number of people in a given work space at one time, continue any work remotely when possible, continue meetings and events by video conference and not in person.

• Disinfect regularly any commonly touched surfaces (10% bleach, 70% EtOH, commercial virucide). Take care never to mix cleaning products, which might produce hazardous fumes. SARS-CoV-2 can remain stable on surfaces for hours to days if not washed away or killed by disinfectant.

• Educate the workforce about SARS-CoV-2 and COVID-19, and provide guidance on best practices for social distancing outside the workplace (e.g., procedures when getting gas/groceries, what has been observed in communities that reopen before proper procedures are in place to prevent viral spread, populations that are at higher risk of morbidity and mortality from COVID-19, etc.).

• If anyone returns to your workplace from out of state, or to a rural area of the state from an area with higher COVID-19 rates, a 14-day quarantine should be required prior to returning to work to ensure the individual is not a carrier.

• As building occupancy increases, emphasize face coverings and minimum 6-foot physical distancing when entering/exiting building, moving in hallways, and in common spaces (such as communal kitchens). Avoid using a bathroom if other stalls are occupied and wait in the hallway.

For more information visit umaine.edu/coronavirus/umaine-science-and-medicine-updates