

Covid-19 and occupational health

Press release from the National Academy of Medicine

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The epidemic of Covid-19 exposes many professionals to the risk of contamination by the virus in the course of their work, in particular healthcare personnel exposed to infected patients. Exposure risks also concern other professions, in reception or counter activities (e.g. employees in the food sector), in contact with the public in confined spaces (e.g. bus drivers) and security professions.

In all sectors, the responsibility of employers is to protect the health of their employees as well as possible, in particular by making daily checks on their state of health, posting prevention instructions and ensuring that they are applied: social distancing of more than 1 meter, regular hand washing with soap or hydro-alcoholic solution (according to the *direction générale de l'administration et de la fonction publique* (DGAFP)- *Secrétariat général des ministères des affaires sociales* (SGCMAS)- *Direction Générale du travail* (DGT) "coronavirus measures" file), and by organising home-based work as well as possible.

In the context of the epidemic of Covid-19, the National Academy of Medicine recommends that:

1. **Health professionals** should be subject to priority measures to reinforce the prevention of contamination: systematic provision of gloves, disposable clothing and means of skin disinfection for all professionals in direct or indirect contact with potentially contaminated persons. With regard to masks, this provision must be prioritised, in particular taking into account the level of exposure and individual risk factors (see the Notice of the National Academy of Medicine published on 23 March 2020);
2. **Professionals working in daily reception or counter activities**, particularly in shops selling food products or on public transports, should be able to benefit from masks and reinforced barrier measures vis-à-vis the public, in particular the installation of transparent plastic or glass screens interposed between professionals and the public, the limitation of contact between food products and the public, the regular decontamination of manual contact surfaces of customers and preferential payment by contactless card;
3. **Safety and security professionals** can, in the context of contact with the public, have the necessary means for barrier measures (safety distance, hydro-alcoholic solution, wearing a mask in case of close contact);

4. **Health professionals and personnel working for the essential functioning of the country (food, public transport, security, etc.),** who have been exposed and suffered serious consequences as a result of Covid-19, are covered for occupational diseases due to viruses, in analogy with the various tables of occupational diseases linked to infectious agents (tables 80, 76, 56 or 45). Pending the publication of this table of occupational diseases, the **National Academy of Medicine recommends that cases of disease linked to occupational contamination may be declared** as a service-related illness for State and community employees, and as an occupational accident for others.