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# YOUR HEALTH AS AN EMPLOYEE DURING COVID-19

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# YOUR HEALTH & SAFETY

Maintaining your health and safety should remain a top priority. As you continue to work under new arrangements and monitor the government guidelines, you should consider the following factors.

## **Assess your remote working set-up**

Review your current working set-up. If working remotely, ask yourself if you have the right equipment to do your job well and if your working space is free of hazards. If you have concerns around working practices and health and safety, communicate these to your employer as soon as possible to get the support needed.

## **Communicate expectations with your employer**

As you put your health and safety first, you must communicate any specific needs with your employer. For example, if you need to take time off to care for dependants, speak to your employer about this so that any changes can be supported.

If your employer is planning for a return to the workplace, it's likely they will implement a phased approach due to social distancing guidelines. If you have a preference for being on-site or continuing to work remotely then you should be proactive and communicate any requests to your manager sooner rather than later – this will increase the likelihood that your employer can accommodate your request.

## **Know your rights**

You may need to use some of your employment rights (such as taking time off to care for dependants) that you may not have had to use before. Alternatively, your employer may have already introduced policies that affect you as they evolve their working practices.

Familiarise yourself with your employee handbook, any related HR policies, and the available government support, so that any decisions you make are in your best interests, are compliant and do not jeopardise your employment rights. If in doubt, consult with an HR representative.

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# YOUR WELLBEING

Your working routine is likely to have changed as a result of COVID-19. This could include changes in circumstances such as working remotely from home with a partner, housemates or family members also present, juggling childcare or other caregiving commitments with your job, or reduced social contact.

You may also have additional concerns about catching the virus and for the health and safety of yourself and your loved ones. It's normal to experience anxiety and stress as a result of these circumstances.

The following steps can help you manage your wellbeing during times of change.

## **Create boundaries and prioritise self-care**

With work and personal life becoming intertwined, it's easy to end up working longer hours and feeling isolated. Without a commute to break up your working day, you may find yourself working long hours and forgetting to take breaks. Setting a regular schedule for your working day and a designated working space can help.

You can also explore the following techniques to promote self-care:

- Practising mindfulness and meditation
- Taking regular exercise
- Eating a healthy and balanced diet
- Planning regular work breaks
- Maintaining a good sleep schedule

## **Communicate well**

You should ensure that you maintain open and transparent communication with your manager. This may need to be even more frequent than usual if you are used to working in an office environment where your colleagues are always a few metres away.

In addition to communicating about workload and expectations, it is vital that you remain open and honest with your employer about how you are feeling and any mental health issues you may be facing due to the changes.

## **Make use of available support**

Your employer may be providing access to mental health support, employee assistance programmes, and other wellbeing initiatives. Make sure you keep abreast of all communications that signpost access to resources available to you and seek advice from your HR representative.

If you manage a team yourself, ensure you have access to the resources you need to provide the necessary support. Your team will benefit from regular check-ins, and you should offer additional pastoral care to support the mental wellbeing of your team and signpost any specialist support on offer from your employer.



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## **Manage your ongoing wellbeing**

Sustaining positive mental health and wellbeing is not an event, it's a process that needs continuous maintenance. Even if you do not currently feel you need access to mental health support, you may do in the future.

It's important, therefore, that you make yourself aware of any programmes or online training courses currently available from your employer, so if at any time you have concerns about your mental health or other related aspects of your wellness, you can access what you need when you need it.

If your employer does not currently offer online training courses, it may be beneficial for them to consider investing in this area and you could encourage them to do so. For example, [Hays Learning](#) is a free online training platform available to all organisations and includes wellbeing courses.

**If you have any questions about what could be next in your career, get in contact with your Hays consultant. For further tips and advice on how to navigate an evolving world of work, and how to advance your career, visit our [Working in the New Era Hub](#) for our latest tips, advice and guides.**