



## Promoting Employee Health & Wellness

How can we make the work environment healthier and more productive as the nation returns to the workplace?

There is a wide array of options for tenants and landlords alike to choose from to actively promote health and wellness in the workplace.

While there is no “silver bullet,” and no two organizations’ solution will be the same, here are some key points from design leaders to consider as you return to work.

### A HEALTHIER OFFICE Zoning and Space Planning Suggestions

To prepare the office environment to be occupied post pandemic, we are outlining some considerations that will help employees feel safe and inspire confidence with returning to the office.

#### Realign Use of Office Space with Work Functions

Once stay at home mandates were lifted, many were apprehensive and don’t feel comfortable. Some strategies to consider implementing to help manage the density in the office include:

- Adopting two “in-office” shifts per day instead of one and allowing for cleaning time between shifts.
- Alternating teams on different days with a day in between for deep cleaning.
- Staggering the return to work by function so that critical teams return first, allowing for more time for planning and adopting of new space strategies.
- Assess the types of activities that would require employees to be in the office, such as certain types of training, onboarding of new staff, mentoring, and cultural and social activities that help reinforce a company’s brand.

#### Retain Some Distance

If your workstation furniture is arranged with users facing each other with low or no screens between them, consider offsetting people every other workstation. Alternatively, consider reorienting the worksurfaces so people are facing away from one another.



Remove storage components like shared lockers and file banks that could be accessed by multiple people. And consider removing some chairs in gathering areas like meeting rooms, cafes and huddle spaces to decrease density and help people transition from social distancing.

#### Keep Wellness Front and Center

Keep lots of options for sanitizing hands, wiping down personal areas, and community areas. Reinforce your rules for cleaning any shared amenity before and after using them. Put cleaning, health and sanitation products front and center and send communications encouraging staff to take advantage.

Continue issuing “desk essentials” kits with items like hand sanitizer and facial tissues to each workstation so that workers can sanitize their hands without getting up. If you added hand washing stations throughout the office to supplement common restrooms and cafes/pantries, consider keeping a few of them in operation.

#### Keep Up the Cleaning Protocols

Reinforce the cleaning protocols currently in place for your office space, do not abandon more robust policies just as staff are reentering the workplace. Plan for continued, stringent cleaning that includes desktops, tables, keyboards, phones, monitors, office equipment, switch-plates, refrigerator and entry door handles, etc.

Keep food and drink away from sanitizing stations / locations - zone food prep areas away from the hand washing areas in cafes / break rooms. In the healthcare environment, sinks are separated from counters where medications are prepared or food trays are placed to avoid cross contamination - apply the same principals here. Keep anything associated with food or drink away from areas where

people are washing their hands or sanitizing to avoid backsplash or chemicals getting into food or drink.

“Spacial arrangements that used to be functional and even comfortable prior to the pandemic can now make workers uneasy and unfocused.”



## MATERIALS AND INFECTION CONTROL

### Improve and Support Wellness

There is an obvious need for a continuation of thorough, frequent cleaning, especially in workplaces that have mostly shared stations or amenities - but with that comes some considerations surrounding material and product selection and how you can make choices to support your policies rather than work against them. In healthcare, the products and materials we select always have to meet rigorous standards of durability and cleanliness, and it's likely that demand will now be present in workspaces.



#### FAVOR SMOOTH SURFACES

Replace surfaces that are porous with less porous ones to inhibit the growth of mold and bacteria. Minimize crevices and multiple edges for easier cleaning.

**What You Can Do Today:** If your environment has open desks with low or no dividers, consider adding divider screens between users and across from them to inhibit the spread of germs. Acrylic, glass, dry-erase board or any other smooth surface that can be easily sprayed, wiped or bleach cleaned is preferable.

**What You Could Do Tomorrow:** Consider replacing porous materials and products with more impervious ones that have anti-viral and anti-bacterial technologies incorporated in them such as nanotechnology, silver ion and copper infusion.

#### REVISIT UPHOLSTRY

Consider robust, wipe-able upholstery in non-woven materials such as silica or polyester. There are other options that tolerate chemical cleaners containing bleach, but anything you choose should be non-PVC for long term employee health.

**What You Can Do Today:** Remove fabric cushion tops on storage pedestal units, minimize porous fabric tack boards and replace with wipe-able options. Minimize guest seating in private offices or replace with cleanable options like polypropylene seating. Consider providing temporary covers for task chairs and arms.

**What You Could Do Tomorrow:** Minimize seating that has folds, flaps, seams, piping, buttons, etc., these features impede rapid cleaning and any nook or cranny can attract and hold grime and pathogens.

#### REPLACE SOFT FLOORING

Obviously the most "cleanliness conscious" spaces will have more hard surface flooring and avoid carpet whenever possible, and like work surfaces, the toughest flooring choices are those that are welded together and seamless, but many non-welded products can hold up to harsh cleaners as well.

**What You Can Do Today:** Deep clean your carpet prior to returning to the workplace and implement a regular maintenance protocol for cleaning soft flooring.

**What You Could Do Tomorrow:** Consider alternative flooring materials that can be cleaned and mopped daily.

#### GO TOUCH-LESS

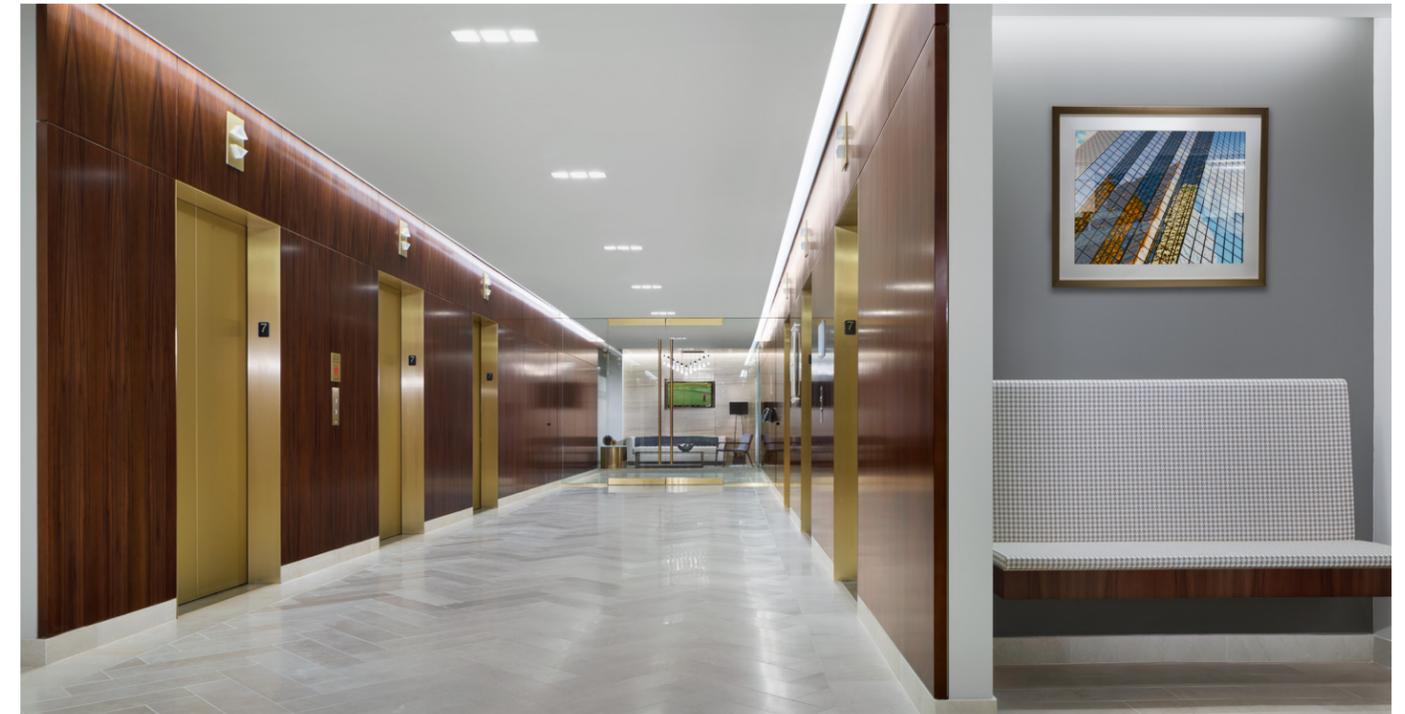
**What You Could Do Tomorrow:** Touch-less or timed appliances (such as faucets, light switches, soap dispensers, trash cans, etc.) reduce opportunities for the spread of viruses and other undesirable pathogens. After implementation some of these solutions even result in reduced operational costs. There are also product options that allow for hands-free adjusting of mechanisms on chairs, monitor arms, and doors. If your office hasn't already, implementing touch-less key-card entry or more voice activated devices like VOIP phones can greatly reduce person to person contact via shared surfaces.

#### DON'T UNDO THE BENEFITS OF HAND WASHING



Use offset drains in sinks so that water falls onto the bottom surface of the sink, rather than into the drain which can cause bacteria that went down the drain to splash back up at the user.

Forced-air hand-dryers tend to discourage use, almost always spread aerosolized germs, and do not stop people from soiling door handles. Instead, install a towel dispenser that encases a roll on its side with the leading towel protruding from the bottom. These don't require the user to touch anything but the disposable towel, have no moving parts, are easy to change, and are quiet.



## AIR HANDLING & QUALITY

### Improvement Options - Finding the Right-Sized Solutions

"Lately, everyone has been feeling powerless in one way or another, but there are actions tenants and landlords can take to reduce the potential spread of disease as staff start returning to the office. In the short term, replacing ventilation system filters and reviewing outside air balance will be the likely first response, but there are other potential improvements that can be applied to these spaces that improve conditions and efficiency." - Ken Golovko

#### UV Lighting in Air Handling Equipment

UV lighting has been mandated in healthcare and educational facilities across the country for a number of years for its effectiveness in sterilizing equipment and spaces. In addition, UV lighting has been shown to be effective in helping reduce absenteeism in certain educational settings, the benefits of which could possibly translate to the workspace. This cost consideration is on a per air handler / system approach. Each different system will need a separate UV lighting system.

#### HEPA / ULPA in Air Distribution

Enhanced filtration can reduce particulate distribution across a workplace. Options for implementation vary in price and complexity from installation in a central air handling unit to 2x2 or 2x4 fan powered diffusers replacing existing static diffusers. Replacing existing diffusers with fan powered diffusers will require new circuits to be installed, whereas adding advanced filtration to central systems will increase brake horsepower and potentially require fan motor replacement and rebalancing, driving up implementation costs.

#### Humidification

Codes and best practices push for a relative humidity of 40-60%. This helps reduce the period of time that viruses remain effective and also supports natural respiratory defenses against the virus. Costs will vary depending on availability of water, drainage, and power sources, as well as the option to utilize a central humidification system, or to apply smaller systems in separate zones.

#### Outside Air / Dilution

By simply diluting the recirculated air in a system one can reduce the amount of virus being transferred through an air handling system - this also increases the positive effect any other actions you take have on reducing the transmission of the pathogen.

It should be noted that capital cost for this can vary widely dependent on the existing system, and operations and maintenance will increase due to greater fan power required, more filter changes, and more heating and cooling dependent upon each season.

#### Cleaning of Ductwork

Cleaning ductwork, both physically and with chemical or UV sterilization can help overall system effectiveness and may reduce colonies where pathogens can breed. However, this may be more effective in sending a positive message to tenants than as an ongoing defense mechanism.