



## COVID GUIDANCE - VENTILATION OF INDOOR WORKPLACES

Ventilation is important to remove harmful virus particles from buildings.

In poorly ventilated rooms the amount of virus in the air can build up, increasing the risk of spreading COVID-19, especially if there are lots of infected people in the room. The virus can also remain in the air after an infected person has left.

Bringing fresh air into a room and removing older stale air that contains virus particles reduces the chance of spreading COVID-19.

Under The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 it is a legal requirement for every employer to make a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks to the health and safety of their employees and others who may be affected in their role. This must be written down if you have more than four employees.

You must identify areas of your workplace that are not well ventilated, include them as a priority in your risk assessment, and introduce control measures to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 as far as is reasonably practicable.

Consideration should be given to any poorly ventilated areas, such as basements or rooms without openable windows and how these are used. The use of CO<sub>2</sub> monitors will help to identify areas of poor ventilation by recording a build-up of CO<sub>2</sub> in the air. Further information is available at: [Ventilation and air conditioning during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) pandemic \(hse.gov.uk\)](https://www.hse.gov.uk/ventilation/covid19/)

Control measures such as avoiding certain activities or gatherings, restricting or reducing the duration of activities, and providing ventilation breaks during or between room usage should be considered alongside ventilation for reducing the risk of airborne transmission.

Employers should provide employees with clear guidance on ventilation, explaining why it is important, and give instructions on how to achieve and maintain good natural ventilation or how to operate ventilation systems if there are user controls.

### Improving ventilation

Air is circulated naturally throughout buildings by vents, chimneys, windows and doors, or by mechanical systems such as air conditioning or extractor fans, or a combination of these.

Where you can, open windows and doors to provide a good air flow throughout the building and open air vents. Do not compromise safety by propping open fire doors.

Having windows and doors open is more challenging in colder weather. It is important to maintain a comfortable workplace temperature balanced with the provision of fresh air. Each business will need to consider the best approach.

It's better not to recirculate air from one space to another.

Recirculation units for heating and cooling that do not draw in a supply of fresh air can remain in operation as long as there is a supply of outdoor air. This could mean leaving windows and doors open.



Make sure that all mechanical ventilation systems are maintained and cleaned regularly in line with manufacturers' instructions. Set the ventilation systems to use a fresh air supply and not recirculate indoor air, where possible.

Ventilation design may be specific to the setting, so assessing the requirement and performance of ventilation systems in many environments will likely need engineering expertise. For some existing and older buildings, ventilation systems may not have been designed to meet current standards and additional mitigations may be needed. If you are unsure, seek the advice of your heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) engineer or adviser. There is detailed technical help available at [CIBSE - Emerging from Lockdown](#)

### **Licensed premises**

COVID is likely going to be with us for many years so we will need to learn to live with it and manage the risks it presents. In favour of short term fixes, it is sensible to consider and implement longer term solutions.

Licenses should be checked before introducing any changes to ensure that the conditions and objectives are upheld and that local residents are not subjected to noise disturbance as a result of opening doors and windows to increase ventilation.

Taking music breaks will allow you to ventilate the premises. For example, stopping the music for 15 minutes every hour will allow you to open doors and windows getting fresh air in, and will minimise the noise disturbance to the neighbours and local residence.

### **NHS COVID Pass**

If ventilation is limited, consider alternative solutions to help mitigate risk such as requiring the NHS COVID Pass as a condition of entry. This is being encouraged by the government for higher risk settings including nightclubs, and is likely to become mandatory from the end of September once everyone over the age of 18 has had the opportunity to be fully vaccinated <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/covid-pass/>

In England anyone over 16 can get an NHS COVID Pass. The pass shows an individual's COVID-19 vaccination status or test results. The pass will show:

- Proof of double vaccination (or single dose of Janssen vaccine)
- Negative PCR test or rapid natural flow test within the past 48 hours
- Positive PCR test within the past 6 months, showing natural immunity following a COVID infection

Businesses will need to consider how implementing a COVID pass would affect entry. Clear signage should be displayed to raise awareness of entry requirements and to mitigate against queues forming.

The government will work with organisations where people are likely to be in close proximity to others outside their household to encourage the use of this. If sufficient measures are not taken to limit infection, the Government will consider mandating certification in certain venues at a later date.

For further information on how to obtain a NHS COVID pass visit [NHS COVID Pass - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)