

CORONAVIRUS AND WASTE PICKERS: DECREASING THE RISKS

March 23, 2020



WIEGO's Cuidar Project in Brazil focuses on understanding the health risks waste pickers face in the workplace. To help support waste pickers, who are at increased risk due to the **COVID-19** outbreak, the Cuidar Project partnered with experts in epidemiology and labour medicine from the University of Brasília and the Health Foundation of Minas Gerais to provide safety recommendations¹ for waste pickers.

Always respect local public health and lockdown orders.



Coronavirus tips to avoid spreading the virus among waste pickers³

Prepare work areas:	For workers:	Tips for clean hands:
<p> Provide soap and water so that workers can frequently wash their hands.</p> <p> Frequently clean (with 70% alcohol or 1% bleach) objects that are used often, like banisters, tables, bathrooms, door handles, personal safety equipment and cushions and handles in vehicles and cafeterias.</p> <p> Inform workers that collected and sorted material can be contaminated with the virus. Recent studies² show that the virus can survive hours and up to days on materials such as aluminium or paper. Treat collected materials as though they are contaminated.</p> <p> Do not share personal objects.</p> <p> Ensure work spaces are properly ventilated.</p>	<p> Do not greet people with handshakes, hugs or kisses. Try to maintain one meter or more distance from anyone.</p> <p> Cover your face with the inside of your elbow when you cough or sneeze.</p> <p> Wear masks and change them frequently during the course of the day. Never touch the front of your mask and wash your hands before and after handling masks.</p> <p> Do not share personal objects.</p> <p> Never touch your face with your hand or glove.</p> <p> Avoid storing gloves inside your bag or pockets.</p> <p> Tie your hair back to avoid contaminating your face.</p>	<p>Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. You should clean all parts of your hands and fists.</p>  <p>Always wash your hands:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » before starting your workday » during breaks » after removing gloves, » before and after meals » when you get home » after coughing or sneezing » after touching objects that are used a lot (banister, door handle, bus or subway handle). <p>You can also use 70% alcohol to clean your hands. But remember it is not as effective as washing your hands with soap and water and may not work if your hands are too dirty or greasy.</p>  <p>FINGERS INTERLACED THUMBS</p>
<p>SYMPTOMS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FEVER COUGH HEADACHE & SORE THROAT SHORTNESS OF BREATH 	<p>Always remember that the collected and sorted materials may be contaminated with the virus.</p> <p>Stay home if you or your family develop symptoms. Self-quarantine for 15 days if you have been exposed to someone with the virus.</p> <p>If a colleague develops symptoms tell him or her to stay home.</p> <p>Wash your hands with water and soap as often as possible.</p>	

When to get help?

If you develop symptoms such as fever, coughing and shortness of breath, follow the guidelines from your local authorities.

Team up with supporting allies and ask leaders and government officials to provide basic conditions for safety such as water fountains, soap supply, protective equipment etc.

In some countries "social grants" are being provided to compensate for livelihood losses. Reach out to your allies and ask for support.

SUPPORT:



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1 These recommendations are based on: "Recommendations for the prevention of the spread of Coronavirus among solid waste workers", a technical note prepared by the National University of Brasília (UNB) and WIEGO's Cuidar Project (Brazil) with additions based on input from waste pickers' organizations through the Global Alliance of Waste Pickers. They also consider recommendations from the World Health Organization, Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA) and Brazil's National Waste Pickers Movement.

2 Kampf G, Todt D, Pfaender S, Steinmann E. Persistence of coronaviruses on inanimate surfaces and their inactivation with biocidal agents. J Hosp Infect. 2020 Mar;104(3):246-251. doi: 10.1016/j.jhin.2020.01.022.

3 Please note: These tips and recommendations are based on the situation of the COVID-19 outbreak as of **March 23, 2020** and the nature of solid waste services in Brazil. You may need to adjust these recommendations based on your local conditions.