

The English version is merely for the purpose of information, the legally binding text is the German text.

MDC Guidelines for the Gradual Transition from Coronavirus-Related Emergency Operations to Basic Operations

of the Max Delbrück Center for Molecular Medicine in the Helmholtz Association

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1. Start of basic operations

The MDC Board of Directors has decided, in conjunction with the Crisis Task Force, to transition to basic operations in two phases.

The first phase will begin on April 27, 2020, and will include the research labs that are not reliant on the Animal Facilities' services, that do not lack childcare options and that can comply with the obligation to wear a mouth-and-nose covering. In a second phase, from May 4, 2020, the entire MDC will move to basic operations until further notice. Currently, it is uncertain when we can begin the transition to normal operations.

2. What does “basic operations” mean?

All employees in the research groups and technology platforms should be able to work at the Buch campus and at BIMSB in Mitte during basic operations. However, they should only be present at the MDC as often and as long as necessary. All employees capable of working remotely and whose presence is not absolutely required in the MDC buildings should continue to work on a remote basis.

Before basic operations can commence, it is required that the group leaders return a copy of the signed declaration “Instruction of Employees on the Start of Basic Operations” (Appendix 1) to the Board of Directors as well as complete the attached document.

Principles:

1. Anyone capable of working on a remote basis should continue such remote work from home. This is especially the case for administrative staff, but also applies to employees working in research groups.
2. Protecting the health of employees and showing mutual respect for one other are the highest priority.
3. At-risk groups must receive special protection. This must be ensured by the immediate supervisors.
4. A potential shortage of childcare options for employees needs to be taken into consideration.
5. Experimental animal services are to be resumed on a reduced scale.
6. Technology platforms will resume their work.
7. Due to the fact that at-risk groups must be protected and that some schools and daycare centers will continue to be closed, as well as due to quarantine regulations, departments/groups may only be able to operate with reduced numbers. This must be taken into account.

3. What preparations do basic operations require?

From April 27, 2020, research groups and their employees can resume basic operations if

- they do not require any experimental animal services,
- they can organize the provision of mouth-and-nose coverings on their own, as the MDC is not able to supply these at the moment,
- their employees are not reliant on the partial opening of schools and daycare centers, and
- they have returned the signed declaration “**Instruction of Employees on the Start of Basic Operations**”
- the presence of the employees is a justified exception in each case. These include, for example: pandemic-relevant research; third-party funded projects that cannot wait; staff members with fixed-term contracts who have to complete central experiments; PhDs whose qualification phase would otherwise be disproportionately protracted; an upcoming publication for which final experiments have to be carried out, and the like.

The binding rules and recommendations of the basic operations shall apply, and the head of the department/research group must ensure compliance with these rules and recommendations before commencing basic operations.

4. How should basic operations be organized?

The MDC has set out **mandatory general provisions** that must be complied with. There are also recommendations for individual organizational measures within the departments/research groups.

Here the interests and concerns of employees need to be given due consideration, for example, by taking into account daycare shortages and by protecting at-risk groups. Should employees have any questions, they can direct these to staff representatives and/or the Board of Directors.

5. Who organizes basic operations?

The head of the respective department/research group is responsible for organizing basic operations. Here the MDC has made additional recommendations. The respective department/research groups, in consultation with their employees, are to choose from these recommendations those that are suitable for them and that they are capable of implementing.

The MDC relies on the personal responsibility and consideration of each individual employee instead of rigid centralized rules. We are convinced that in this way each

department/research group can find tailored solutions that enjoy wide acceptance. Each management official/PI is to complete beforehand the attached declaration “Instruction of Employees on the Start of Basic Operations” and send it to the [Board of Directors \(Office.Grassmann@mdc-berlin.de\)](mailto:Office.Grassmann@mdc-berlin.de).

6. Animal facilities

The animal facilities will continue to operate on a reduced scale so as to ensure that the animals are taken care of properly despite potential staff shortages. Breeding/experimental animal services are available only on a reduced basis. Reduced breeding will begin from May 4, 2020, in consultation with the responsible animal keeper. It is requested that you notify the animal keeper of your requirements by April 29, 2020.

7. Mandatory general provisions

Please note that some of the general provisions are prescribed by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. The Ministry published a [SARS-CoV-2 Occupational Safety and Health Standard](#) on April 16, 2020.

7.1 Persons with respiratory symptoms

Persons with respiratory symptoms (other than, for example, a cold that has been diagnosed by a physician) or persons with a fever should generally not be on campus or in MDC buildings. The basic principle is that you should never come to work sick.

7.2 Mouth-and-nose coverings required inside buildings

As a general rule, in **MDC buildings it is mandatory** to wear a mouth-and-nose covering. In the offices, however, this is only mandatory if it is not possible to maintain the minimum distance of 2 meters or if more people are present in the same room than envisaged (see Section 7.3). Coverings such as non-medical “community” masks, buffs or scarves are sufficient.

Das MDC is working to provide mouth-and-nose coverings to its employees and guests as quickly as possible through the reception desk in building 31.1 and in Mitte. There are special arrangements for individual departments (the Animal Facilities Department has its own supply, as do the Technical Facility Management and IT Departments). In light of the current shortage, we ask all employees to initially provide their own mouth-and-nose covering. [The proper use](#) of community masks is part of the hygiene instructions (see also Appendix 2).

7.3 Hygiene rules

The rules set out in the Hygiene Concept (see Appendix 4) as well as the social distancing rules – ideally 2 meters, but at least 1.5 meters – must be observed.

- The hygiene rules are to be observed in all work and common areas. The respective head of department/research group must instruct his or her employees of these rules and place this instruction on record. This is documented in the declaration **“Instruction of Employees on the Start of Basic Operations”**. Wherever possible, a distance of ideally 2 meters, but at least 1.5 meters should be kept between yourself and other people (“social distancing”).
- Regular hand hygiene is to be performed (clean hands thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds).
- Coughing and sneezing etiquette must be observed (e.g., coughing and sneezing into the crook of your elbow).
- Fact sheet from the Federal Ministry of Health: [“Viral infections – hygiene works”](#)
- Further resources from the Robert Koch Institute (RKI):
[“Hygiene measures for non-medical emergency personnel”](#) (German only)
[“Protecting yourself from the virus”](#) (German only)

7.4 Ensuring safe distancing of ideally 2 meters, but at least 1.5 meters when using means of access such as stairs, doors and elevators, and following the route guidance system.

- When using kitchenettes, be sure to maintain social distancing of ideally 2 meters, but at least 1.5 meters.
- Enter individually through entrance doors! Entry to buildings is documented when you separately unlock the door with your code card. Always use your code card to enter buildings!
- Toilet facilities may only be entered by one person at a time.
- Laboratory doors should be kept closed at all times, as this will prevent the air conditioning system from exchanging the air.
- Do not use the elevators! Exceptions are the transport of heavy loads and persons with disabilities. In these exceptional cases, the elevator should only be used individually whenever possible.
- Follow the signs for up and down stairways.
- Office corridors should only be walked through individually, otherwise social distancing of ideally 2 meters, but at least 1.5 meters must be maintained.
- Follow the signs for laboratory entrances and exits (one-way system).

7.5 Measures to reduce the occupancy of work areas and communal facilities (staggered working and break times, shift system).

- Occupancy of work areas and communal facilities must be reduced by measures to spread utilization over time (staggered working and break times; if necessary, shift operation).
- Suitable organizational measures must be taken to prevent gatherings of employees at the beginning and end of working hours (such as at time recording terminals and in changing rooms, washrooms, and showers).
- Employees must keep a safe distance (ideally 2 meters, but at least 1.5 meters) from other persons. If this is not possible, including where it cannot be ensured by organizational means, alternative protective measures must be taken (wearing of masks, structural adjustments, etc.).
- Office work should be carried out remotely at home where possible. Otherwise, for office workers, free office capacity must be used and work organized in such a way that multiple occupancy of office premises can be avoided or safe distances are maintained. We are currently working to provide additional office space. However, this can only be realized on a gradual basis. Please indicate your need for additional office space in the declaration **“Instruction of Employees on the Start of Basic Operations”**.

7.6 Events, in-person meetings and business trips are not permitted

All meetings and business trips will be replaced by telephone or video conferencing. It is currently not possible to use meeting rooms. They are needed to provide additional office space.

7.7 Access to premises by outside individuals reduced a minimum

- Distance of ideally 2 meters, but at least 1.5 meters must also be observed during any work-related (customer) contact outside the MDC’s premises, or otherwise personal protective equipment must be worn.
- Outside individuals must also be informed about the SARS-CoV-2 infection control measures that currently apply at the research center.
- When entering the MDC’s premises, outside individuals must declare that they are not infected and that they will adhere to these guidelines. The time and date at which outside individuals arrive at and depart from the premises must be recorded.

7.8 Time band for flexible working arrangements changed

Staggered working times/shift system can now be organized **Monday to Saturday**, from **6:00**

a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Germany's Working Time Act prohibits employees from working on Sundays. In this regard please note the IT support times!

IT support: Tickets can be opened at any time via the portal or email. Telephone support continues to be available from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. On-site support is – in order to reduce contact and exposure – only possible in limited circumstances.

7.9 Employees suspected of having the coronavirus are required to notify the responsible personnel officers and supervisors.

Notable symptoms of infection with coronavirus include fever, coughing and shortness of breath. Employees with relevant symptoms are to be asked to leave the campus immediately or stay at home. Until the suspected infection has been assessed by a physician, the employee must be assumed to be unfit for work. Affected individuals should contact a physician or the public health office (*Gesundheitsamt*) for assessment without delay, initially by telephone, and also inform the responsible personnel officer and supervisor.

7.10 Infected persons and contact persons will be blocked from entering the MDC as well as the campus. Access cards will be temporarily blocked by Central Services.

7.11 Regulations for persons entering Germany issued by the Berlin Senate (incl. the requirement to notify the public health authorities) apply to everyone.

Persons entering Germany are [legally required to notify the public health authorities](#): By reason of provisions issued by the federal states (*Länder*) pursuant to section 30 (1) sentence 2 of the Protection against Infection Act, persons entering the Federal Republic of Germany by land, sea or air, from another country, are currently required to isolate themselves and must proceed directly to their own home, or other suitable accommodation, immediately after their arrival and remain there exclusively for a period of 14 days after their entry into the country. They are also required to contact their competent public health office (*Gesundheitsamt*) without delay and inform the latter of their entry into the country.

7.12 Mouth-and-nose coverings are mandatory on Berlin's public transportation system from Monday, April 27, 2020.

8. Recommendations

8.1 Risk groups can get advice from the occupational physician (see also Section 2.3).

The Robert Koch Institute has put together an [overview](#) of which groups of people might be at higher risk from severe illness from COVID-19. Employees can seek individual advice from the occupational physician, including on special risks due to a prior illness or individual susceptibility. This consultation may be provided by telephone. The occupational physician knows the workplace and can suggest suitable preventive measures to the employer in instances where the normal occupational safety and health measures are not sufficient. If necessary, the occupational physician may recommend that a person work remotely. The employer will only learn about this if the person concerned gives their express consent. The employee will notify the responsible personnel officer that he or she belongs to an at-risk group and will work remotely.

8.2 Spreading utilization over time

Possible measures are staggered working and break times and, if necessary, shift operation. In the event of shift operation, options include morning/afternoon shifts (please allow a period of a time between shift changes in order to prevent overlaps) or daily or weekly rotation.

8.3 Coordinating the occupancy of work spaces

Office work should be performed if possible remotely at home, especially if office premises would otherwise have to be used by multiple people with insufficient distancing. Remote working can also help enable employees reconcile work with care needs (childcare or nursing care for relatives).

The heads of the departments/research groups are to ensure that that the following number of persons are not exceeded:

- | | |
|--|-------------|
| - Offices:* | 1–2 persons |
| - Open-plan offices:* | 3–4 persons |
| - Small laboratories:* | 1–2 persons |
| - Open-plan laboratories (e.g., H.89): * | 4 persons |
| - Work bays:* | 2 persons |

*For BIMSB, see Appendix 2.

8.4 Avoiding public transportation

It is recommended to travel to work alone by foot, bike, car, motorcycle or scooter. However, should circumstances make it necessary to use public transportation, social distancing of at least 1.5 meters should be maintained whenever possible. Please wear masks or other mouth-and-nose coverings when riding the public transportation system. If employees travel by S-Bahn, it is recommended that they avoid taking the bus from the S-Bahn station to the campus. Instead, they should use the free rental bikes or go by foot.

Berlin, April 24, 2020

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IN THE HELMHOLTZ ASSOCIATION

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Appendix 1: Instruction of Employees on the Start of Basic Operations
Appendix 2: Fact Sheet on Mouth-and-Nose Coverings
Appendix 3: Distancing Rules at BIMSB
Appendix 4: Hygiene Concept