

COVID-19 Return to Work Protocols

Decisions about return to work with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 or any other pandemic situation should be made in the context of local circumstances.

Options include a test-based strategy or a non-test-based strategy (i.e., time-since-illness-onset and time-since-recovery strategy). See *below*.

Return to Work Criteria:

For employees with access to testing, the CDC recommends :

- they remain in isolation until they have an improvement of respiratory symptoms (cough and shortness of breath),
- no fever (without the use of fever-reducing medications), and
- two negative test results from consecutive nasopharyngeal swabs taken at least 24 hours apart.
- Patients who tested positive for COVID-19 but never showed symptoms should wait until it's been seven days since their positive test result.

For employees without access to testing, the CDC recommends :

- they stay in isolation until it's been at least seven days since their symptoms first appeared, and
- 72 hours since their fever resolved (without the aid of fever-reducing medications) and respiratory symptoms began to improve.

Return to Work Practices and Work Restrictions

After returning to work, from COVID -19 positive case, or “assumptive case” if testing not done:

The employee must:

- Wear a facemask at all times while in the facility until all symptoms are completely resolved or until 14 days after illness onset, whichever is longer.
- Adhere to hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene, and cough etiquette in CDC's interim infection control guidance (e.g., cover nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing, dispose of tissues in waste receptacles)

Self-monitor for symptoms, and seek re-evaluation from if respiratory symptoms recur or worsen.

In the event that an employee becomes sick during the work day:

Separate sick employees:

Employees who appear to have symptoms (i.e., fever, cough, or shortness of breath) upon arrival at work or who become sick during the day should immediately be separated from other employees, customers, and visitors and sent home. This refers to the onset of new symptoms and not chronic, pre-existing conditions.

If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19 infection, employers should inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace but maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The fellow employees should then self-monitor for symptoms (i.e., fever, cough, or shortness of breath).

Implement flexible sick leave and supportive policies and practices.

Ensure that sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance and that employees are aware of and understand these policies.

- Maintain flexible policies that permit employees to stay home to care for a sick family member or take care of children due to school and childcare closures.
- Additional flexibilities might include, if available, allowing employees to donate sick leave to each other.

Employers should not require a positive COVID-19 test result or a healthcare provider's note for employees who are sick to validate their illness, qualify for sick leave, or to return to work. Healthcare provider offices and medical facilities may be extremely busy and not able to provide such documentation in a timely manner.