



What Employers and Employees Should Know

About Return to Work from COVID-19

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has issued the following guidance for employers regarding when an employee who either tested positive for COVID-19 or who exhibited symptoms may be permitted to return to work.¹

Employees who were not tested for COVID-19, but who had symptoms and were directed to isolate at home may return under the following conditions:

- At least three days (72 hours) have passed since recovery, which is defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications.
- The improvement of respiratory symptoms, such as coughing and shortness of breath.
- At least seven days have passed since symptoms first appeared.

If the employee is tested to determine if they are still contagious, they also can leave home after these three things have happened:

- The employee no longer has a fever without the use of fever-reducing medication.
- Other symptoms have improved (for example, when the cough or shortness of breath have improved).
- The employee has received two negative tests in a row, 24 hours apart.

If the employee has tested positive for COVID-19 but has not exhibited any symptoms, they can discontinue isolation when:

- At least seven days have passed since the date of their first positive COVID-19 diagnostic test.
- They have had no subsequent illness provided they remain asymptomatic.
- For 3 days following discontinuation of isolation, these persons should continue to limit contact (stay 6 feet away from others) and limit potential of dispersal of respiratory secretions by wearing a covering for their nose and mouth while in settings where other persons are present.

Due to time constraints, privacy regulations and a lack of testing, CDC and OSHA guidelines recommend that employers do 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."^{2 3}

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/disposition-in-home-patients.html>

² <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html>

³ <https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf>