# What to Do If You Receive a Report of COVID-19 in the Workplace

CDC recommends 14 days of quarantine after exposure based on the time it takes to develop illness if infected. Thus, it is possible that a person *known* to be infected could leave isolation earlier than a person who is quarantined because of the *possibility* they are infected. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/disposition-in-home-patients.html>

This recommendation will prevent most, but cannot prevent all, instances of secondary spread. The risk of transmission after recovery is likely substantially less than that during illness; recovered persons will not be shedding large amounts of virus by this point, if they are shedding at all. Employers and local public health authorities can choose to apply more stringent criteria for certain persons where a higher threshold to prevent transmission is warranted.

For certain populations, a longer timeframe after recovery may be desired to minimize the chance of prolonged shedding of replication-competent virus. Such persons include:

* [healthcare personnel](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/healthcare-facilities/hcp-return-work.html) in close contact with vulnerable persons at high-risk for illness and death if those persons get COVID-19 and
* [persons who have conditions that might weaken their immune system](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/groups-at-higher-risk.html#immunocompromised) which could prolong viral shedding after recovery.

Sick workers should stay home or go home if they develop symptoms during the work day.

* Workers who have [symptoms](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/symptoms.html) (e.g., fever, cough, or shortness of breath) should notify their supervisor and stay home or go home.
* Sick workers should follow [CDC-recommended steps](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html). Workers should not return to work until they meet all the criteria to [end home isolation](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/disposition-in-home-patients.html), in consultation with healthcare providers.

Sick customers should not come into contact with employees and will be provided services remotely as an alternative to direct contact. Sick customers should be responsible to adhere to the CDC recommendations reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Employers notified of an employee or customer testing positive for COVID-19 should:

* Take action immediately in response to an employee or customer who reports a positive test for or a presumption of COVID-19. Employers should be flexible and efficient in order to maintain a safe workplace and allow the focus to be on the work of the company going forward.
* Shut down those areas of the workplace identified by the infected employee as areas that he or she used until those areas can be cleaned in accordance with [CDC guidelines](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html).
* Clean and disinfect a sick worker’s workspace and any place they have been within the facility. Wait 24 hours or, if 24 hours is not possible, as long as practical before you clean or disinfect.
* Clear other employees of the affected areas before cleaning.
* Open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in the exposed area, if reasonable given food safety regulations.
* Collect information about the worker’s contacts among co-workers, up to 2 days prior to symptom onset, to identify other workers who could be considered exposed.
* If a worker is confirmed infected, inform fellow workers of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace but maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act. The employer should instruct fellow workers about how to proceed based on the [CDC Public Health Recommendations for Community-Related Exposure](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/public-health-recommendations.html).
* Contact the local area Health Department for Contact Tracing requirements.
* Employees should not return to work until they have been cleared by their physician.

For further information, consult CDC’s [Interim Guidance for Implementing Safety Practices for Critical Infrastructure Workers Who May Have Had Exposure to a Person with Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/critical-workers/implementing-safety-practices.html),  [What to Do If You Are Sick](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fif-you-are-sick%2Fcaring-for-yourself-at-home.html), and [Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fprepare%2Fdisinfecting-building-facility.html).

CDC guidance based on community exposure, for people exposed to people with known or suspected COVID-19 or possible COVID-19

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| Current guidance based on community exposure, for asymptomatic persons exposed to persons with known or suspected COVID-19 or possible COVID-19 | | |
| Person | Exposure to | Recommended Precautions for the Public |
| Individual who has had close contact (< 6 feet)\*\* for ≥15 minutes\*\*\* | * Person with COVID-19 who has [symptoms](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html) (in the period from 2 days before symptom onset until they meet criteria for [discontinuing home isolation](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/disposition-in-home-patients.html); can be laboratory-confirmed or a clinically compatible illness) * Person who has tested positive for COVID-19 (laboratory confirmed) but has not had any [symptoms](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html) (in the 2 days before the date of specimen collection until they meet criteria for [discontinuing home isolation](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/disposition-in-home-patients.html)) | * Stay home until 14 days after last exposure and maintain social distance (at least 6 feet) from others at all times * Self-monitor for symptoms   + Check temperature twice a day   + Watch for fever\*, cough, or shortness of breath, or other [symptoms](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html) of COVID-19 * Avoid contact with [people at higher risk for severe illness](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-higher-risk.html) from COVID-19 * Follow [CDC guidance](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html) if symptoms develop |
| All U.S. residents, other than those with a known risk exposure | * Possible unrecognized COVID-19 exposures in U.S. communities | * [Practice social distancing](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/social-distancing.html) and other [personal prevention strategies](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html) * Be alert for symptoms   + Watch for fever\*, cough, or shortness of breath, or other [symptoms](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html) of COVID-19   + Check temperature if symptoms develop * Follow [CDC guidance](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html) if symptoms develop |

\*For the purpose of this guidance, fever is defined as subjective fever (feeling feverish) or a measured temperature of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher. Note that fever may be intermittent or may not be present in some people, such as those who are elderly, immunocompromised, or taking certain fever-reducing medications (e.g., nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs [NSAIDS]).

\*\* Data to inform the definition of close contact are limited. Factors to consider when defining close contact include proximity, the duration of exposure (e.g., longer exposure time likely increases exposure risk), and whether the exposure was to a person with symptoms (e.g., coughing likely increases exposure risk).

\*\*\*Data are insufficient to precisely define the duration of time that constitutes a prolonged exposure. Recommendations vary on the length of time of exposure, but 15 minutes of close exposure can be used as an operational definition. Brief interactions are less likely to result in transmission; however, symptoms and the type of interaction (e.g., did the infected person cough directly into the face of the exposed individual) remain important.