**Suspected or Confirmed Cases of COVID-19 in the Workplace**

What should I do if an employee comes to work with COVID-19 symptoms (fever, cough, or shortness of breath)?

Employees who have symptoms when they arrive at work or become sick during the day should immediately be separated from other employees, customers, and visitors and sent home. Employees who develop symptoms outside of work should notify their supervisor and stay home.

Sick employees should follow [CDC-recommended steps](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html). Employees should not return to work until they have met the criteria to [discontinue home isolation](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/disposition-in-home-patients.html) and have consulted with a healthcare provider and state or local health department.

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

What should I do if an employee is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19?

In most cases, you do not need to shut down your facility. But do close off any areas used for prolonged periods of time by the sick person:

* Wait 24 hours before cleaning and disinfecting to minimize potential for other employees being exposed to respiratory droplets. If waiting 24 hours is not feasible, wait as long as possible.
* During this waiting period, open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in these areas.

Follow the [CDC cleaning and disinfection recommendations](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html):

* Clean dirty surfaces with soap and water before disinfecting them.
* To disinfect surfaces, use [products that meet EPA criteria for use against SARS-Cov-2external iconexternal icon](https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2), the virus that causes COVID-19, and are appropriate for the surface.
* Always wear gloves and gowns appropriate for the chemicals being used when you are cleaning and disinfecting.
* You may need to wear additional personal protective equipment (PPE) depending on the setting and disinfectant product you are using.

In addition to cleaning and disinfecting, employers should determine which employees may have been exposed to the virus and need to take additional precautions:

* Most workplaces should follow the [Public Health Recommendations for Community-Related Exposure](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/public-health-recommendations.html).
* Critical infrastructure workplaces should follow the guidance [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).

Sick employees should follow [CDC-recommended steps](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html). Employees should not return to work until they have met the criteria to [discontinue home isolation](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/disposition-in-home-patients.html) and have consulted with a healthcare provider and state or local health department.

If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19, 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).

If employees have been exposed but are not showing symptoms, should I allow them to work?

Employees may have been exposed if they are a “close contact” of someone who infected, which is defined as being within approximately 6 feet (2 meters) of a person with COVID-19 for a prolonged period of time:

* Potentially exposed employees who **have** symptoms of COVID-19 should self-isolate and follow [CDC recommended steps](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html).
* Potentially exposed employees who **do not have** symptoms should remain at home or in a comparable setting and practice social distancing for 14 days.

All other employees should self-monitor for symptoms such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath. If they develop symptoms, they should notify their supervisor and stay home.

See [Public Health Recommendations for Community-Related Exposure](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/public-health-recommendations.html) for more information.

To ensure continuity of operations of essential functions, CDC advises that [critical infrastructure workersexternal iconexternal icon](https://www.cisa.gov/identifying-critical-infrastructure-during-covid-19) may be permitted to continue work following potential exposure to COVID-19, provided they remain symptom-free and additional precautions are taken to protect them and the community.

* Critical infrastructure businesses have an obligation to limit, to the extent possible, the reintegration of in-person workers who have been exposed to COVID-19 but remain symptom-free in ways that best protect the health of the worker, their co-workers, and the general public.
* An analysis of core job tasks and workforce availability at worksites can allow the employer to match core activities to other equally skilled and available in-person workers who have not been exposed.
* A critical infrastructure worker who is symptom-free and returns to work should wear a face mask at all times while in the workplace for 14 days after last exposure. Employers can issue facemasks or can approve employees’ supplied cloth face coverings in the event of shortages.

See [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) for more information.

What should I do if I find out several days later, after an employee worked, that they were diagnosed with COVID-19?

* If it has been **less than 7 days** since the sick employee used the facility, clean and disinfect all areas used by the sick employee following the [CDC cleaning and disinfection recommendations](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html).
* If it has been **7 days or more** since the sick employee used the facility, additional cleaning and disinfection is not necessary. Continue routinely cleaning and disinfecting all high-touch surfaces in the facility.
* Other employees may have been exposed to the virus if they were in “close contact” (within approximately 6 feet or 2 meters) of the sick employee for a prolonged period of time.
  + Those who have symptoms should self-isolate and follow [CDC recommended steps](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html).
  + In most workplaces, those potentially exposed but with no symptoms should remain at home or in a comparable setting and practice social distancing for 14 days.
  + Critical infrastructure workers should follow [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). A critical infrastructure worker who is symptom-free and returns to work should wear a face mask at all times while in the workplace for 14 days after last exposure. Employers can issue facemasks or can approve employees’ supplied cloth face coverings in the event of shortages.
* Employees not considered exposed should self-monitor for symptoms such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath. If they develop symptoms, they should notify their supervisor and stay home.

When should an employee suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 return to work?

Sick employees should follow [steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19 if you are sick](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html). Employees should not return to work until they meet the criteria to [discontinue home isolation](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/disposition-in-home-patients.html) and have consulted with a healthcare provider and state or local health department.

Employers should not require sick employee to provide a negative COVID-19 test result or healthcare provider’s note to return to work. Employees with COVID-19 who have stayed home can stop home isolation and return to work when they have met one of the following sets of criteria:

* Option 1: If, in consultation with a healthcare provider and local public health authorities knowledgeable about locally available testing resources, it is determined **an employee will not have a test** to determine if they are still contagious, the employee can leave home and return to work after these three conditions have been met:
  + The employee has had no fever for at least 72 hours (that is, 3 full days of no fever without the use medicine that reduces fevers)  
    AND
  + respiratory symptoms have improved (for example, cough or shortness of breath have improved)  
    AND
  + at least 10 days have passed since their symptoms first appeared
* Option 2: If, in consultation with a healthcare provider and local public health authorities knowledgeable about locally available testing resources, it is determined **the employee will be tested** to determine if the employee is still contagious, the employee can leave home after these three conditions have been met:
  + The employee no longer has a fever (without the use of medicine that reduces fevers)  
    AND
  + respiratory symptoms have improved (for example, cough or shortness of breath have improved)  
    AND
  + they received two negative tests in a row, at least 24 hours apart. Their doctor should follow [CDC guidelines](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/disposition-in-home-patients.html).

What should I do if an employee has a respiratory illness?

Employees who appear to have COVID-19 symptoms, such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath, upon arrival to work or become sick during the day with COVID-19 symptoms should immediately be separated from other employees, customers, and visitors and sent home.

CDC has a [symptom self-checker](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html) chatbot called Clara that employers and employees may find helpful. It has a series of questions and recommends what level of medical care, if any, the user should seek. It is not intended to provide diagnosis or treatment.

What does “acute” respiratory illness mean?

“Acute” respiratory illness is an infection of the upper or lower respiratory tract that may interfere with normal breathing, such as COVID-19. “Acute” means of recent onset. A respiratory illness that is acute, that is, of recent onset (for example, for a few days), and is used to distinguish from chronic respiratory illnesses like asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

Are allergy symptoms considered an acute respiratory illness?

No. Allergy symptoms are not considered an acute respiratory illness.