

What to do when an employee is exposed to COVID-19 or tests positive for COVID-19?

A question and answer document for the business community

Please note: This guidance is **NOT** intended for health care and congregate living personnel. This guidance is **NOT** a substitute for recommendations from an employee's primary care provider or other medical staff. The Region 2 Medical Advisory Board and BRAC based these recommendations on CDC and LDH recommendations. This document will be updated on a semiregular basis, but each link provided will give you and your organization the most up to date recommendations.

I HAVE AN EMPLOYEE WHO TESTED POSITIVE FOR COVID-19

Do I need to contact the Office of Public Health about this employee?

No, you do not need to contact anyone. You will need to follow the [CDC guidelines](#) under *Prevent and Reduce Transmission Among Employees*. This section discusses what to do with employees experiencing symptoms and those that have tested positive.

Do I need to shut down my facility if the employee was at the facility while contagious?

No, you do not need to shut down, but you do need to clean, which might mean closing areas of the workplace for about 24 hours. See "[How do I need to clean my facility...](#)" for more information.

What steps should I take after an employee at my facility tests positive for COVID-19?

- Follow [CDC guidelines](#) for cleaning your facility. When possible, do not reopen until cleaning has been completed.
- Do not allow the employee who tested positive or other employees whom had close contact with that person to come to work.

Do I need to notify customers or clients?

If the employee with the positive test had close contact (within 6 feet for 15 minutes or more) with any customers or clients, those individuals will be contacted by a contact tracer with the Louisiana Department of Health. The contact tracer will ask questions about the employee's health status, where they have traveled, and who else they have been in contact with while contagious. The contact tracer will then notify any close contacts and inform that they have been exposed to the virus. The positive employee may also call the contact tracers at 1-877-766-2130, if they have not yet received a call. Employers should also proactively follow recommendations to make sure any ill employees stay home and close contacts of an employee who is positive for COVID-19 quarantine at home for 10 days. See the [CDC's Guidance for Businesses](#) for additional information.

Does a business with a positive employee need to notify the general public?

No.

How do I need to clean my facility after an employee tested positive for COVID-19 and was at work while contagious?

If an employee tests positive for COVID-19 and worked while contagious, it is recommended to thoroughly clean this space using [EPA-approved disinfectants](#) effective against COVID-19. According to the CDC, the following cleaning and disinfecting recommendations should be performed in your facility:

- **Close off areas** used by the person who is sick.
 - Companies do not necessarily need to close operations, if they can close off affected areas.
- **Open outside doors and windows** to increase air circulation in the area.



- **Wait 24 hours** before you clean or disinfect. If 24 hours is not feasible, wait as long as possible.
- Clean and disinfect **all areas used by the person who is sick**, such as offices, bathrooms, common areas, shared electronic equipment like tablets, touch screens, keyboards, remote controls, and ATM machines.
- [Vacuum the space](#) if needed. Use vacuums equipped with a high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter, if available.
 - Do not vacuum a room or space that has people in it. Wait until the room or space is empty to vacuum, such as at night, for common spaces, or during the day for private rooms.
 - Consider temporarily turning off room fans and the central HVAC system that services the room or space, so that particles that escape from vacuuming will not circulate throughout the facility.
- Once the area has been appropriately disinfected, it can be opened for use.
 - Workers without close contact with the person who is sick can return to work immediately after disinfection.
- If more than 7 days since the person who is sick visited or used the facility, additional cleaning and disinfection is not necessary.
 - Continue routine cleaning and disinfection. This includes everyday practices that businesses and communities normally use to maintain a healthy environment.

When can an employee with a positive COVID-19 test return to work?

Employees with a positive test may return to work when they meet the following criteria recommended by the [CDC](#):

- **If the employee had symptoms**, they can return to work after:
 - 10 days since symptoms first appeared **and**
 - 24 hours with no fever without the use of fever-reducing medications **and**
 - Other symptoms of COVID-19 are improving
- **If the employee had no symptoms**, they may return to work after:
 - 10 days have passed since their positive test

We recommend against requiring employees to have a negative COVID-19 test before returning to work. People with COVID-19 may have positive test results for weeks after they recover, but are not contagious after they meet the symptom criteria above. Requiring a negative test places an unnecessary burden on the employee and may prevent you from providing services due to extended employee absences.

Does an employee need a clearance letter from the Louisiana Department of Health or their doctor before they can return to work?

No, employees do not need a clearance letter before returning to work, as long as they meet the criteria above.

What if the employee diagnosed with COVID-19 is asymptomatic? When can they come back to work?

Employees that are asymptomatic but had a positive test or diagnosis for COVID-19 should:

- Self-isolate and monitor their health for 10 days.
- If they have no symptoms, they may return to work 10 days after testing
- If they develop symptoms during the 10 days, they should extend isolation precautions for at least 10 days from the date of symptom onset and must meet the following criteria before returning to work:
 - 10 days since symptoms first appeared **and**
 - 24 hours with no fever without the use of fever-reducing medications **and**
 - Other symptoms of COVID-19 are improving

I HAVE AN EMPLOYEE WHO HAD CLOSE CONTACT TO SOMEONE WHO TESTED POSITIVE FOR COVID-19

When can an employee that has had close contact to COVID-19 return to work?

Close contact is defined as being within 6 feet of an unmasked infected person for a prolonged period (15 minutes or more) starting from 48 hours before illness onset. Employees that have been exposed to a COVID-19 positive person may return to work when they meet the following criteria:

- Self-isolated for 10 days from last contact with a sick person and have had no symptoms
- If symptoms develop during the self-isolation period, employees must stay home and avoid others until:
 - 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared **and**
 - 24 hours have passed with no fever without the use of fever-reducing medications **and**
 - Other symptoms of COVID-19 are improving

Employees do not need a clearance letter to return to work.

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT COVID-19 AND THE WORKPLACE

Should I require my employees be tested for COVID-19 before they can work?

No, we recommend against requiring employees to be tested before being able to work. A test only tells us if a person has COVID-19 on the day they are tested.

Furthermore, we DO NOT recommend requiring a negative COVID-19 test result(s) to return to work after testing positive. This is because people with COVID-19 may have positive test results for weeks after they recover but are not contagious after they meet the isolation criteria.

Requiring documentation or proof of a test puts an unnecessary burden on staff and delays when an employee is able to start work. As always, any employee who is sick or has symptoms should not be at work.

What should an employer do to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in their facility?

Employers should:

- Allow employees to work remotely, communicate virtually, and limit in-person meetings and gatherings
- Stagger work schedules and rearrange workspaces to allow physical distancing to be maintained
- Ensure employees have proper PPE (gloves, masks, etc. as defined by job duties and risk of exposure), handwashing supplies, and hand sanitizer
- Train employees on:
 - Your employee illness policy
 - The symptoms of COVID-19
 - What to do if they test positive
 - What to do if they were exposed
 - The importance of frequent hand washing or sanitizing
 - The importance of heightened cleaning and sanitizing protocols
 - The importance of physical distancing
 - When to wear PPE
 - The proper way to wear PPE



What are the symptoms of COVID-19 that I should have my employees self-monitor prior to coming to work?

It is important to note that symptoms may appear **2-14 days after exposure to the virus**. Symptoms include:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- Sore throat
- New loss of taste or smell
- Congestion or runny nose

This list is not all-inclusive. Other less common symptoms have been reported, including gastrointestinal symptoms like nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea. An updated list of symptoms can be found on the [CDC website](#).

Will my business be contacted if one of my employees tests positive?

Not necessarily. The Louisiana Department of Health's contact tracers will only contact the individual who tested positive and that person's close contacts using the process described above. If a place of business has two or more positive employees, public health may follow-up to provide prevention recommendations. Each business can implement their own reporting requirements for their employees. Typical requirements include notification of the employer by the employee if that person tested positive for COVID-19 or if that person was exposed to someone with COVID-19. Employers should also proactively follow recommendations to make sure any ill employees stay home and close contacts of an employee who is positive for COVID-19 quarantine at home for 10 days. See the [CDC's Guidance for Businesses](#) for additional information.

Due to HIPAA, it is important not to share any unnecessary information about the positive employee with other employees from the workplace. Instead, provide general information about the employee's exposure and guidance provided by the health department to prevent the spread of the COVID-19.

What is the definition of close contact?

Close contact is defined as being within 6 feet of an unmasked infected person for a prolonged period (15 minutes or more) starting from 48 hours before illness onset. The 15 minutes does not need to be continuous (e.g., three, five-minute periods would count), and wearing a cloth face covering would be considered a masked infected person and would not count as a close contact.

When and how should I clean my facility?

At this time, it is strongly encouraged that all businesses clean on a more frequent basis and clean all high-touch surfaces every two hours or after every user when possible. The CDC has information on [cleaning in a facility](#).



RESOURCES

- [City of Baton Rouge](#) COVID-19 Resource page
- [Baton Rouge Area Chamber](#) COVID-19 Resources
- Louisiana Department of Health COVID-19 [Guidance and Resources](#)
- Office of the Governor information about [Phase 3 Guidance for Businesses & Venues](#)
- For food operators, review the [FDA's What to Do If You Have a COVID-19 Confirmed Positive Worker or Workers Who Have Been Exposed to a Confirmed Case of COVID-19](#)
- CDC Factsheet on [Cleaning and Disinfecting in a Facility](#)
- CDC General Business [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- CDC [Interim Guidance for Business and Employers Responding to COVID-19](#)

COVID-19 SCENARIOS AT THE WORKPLACE POLICY AND REQUIREMENTS FOR RETURNING TO WORK

Employee Scenario	Policy
A. Employee has no symptoms (asymptomatic) and has tested positive for COVID-19	<p>Do not allow employee to physically report to work. Arrange alternative methods of communication, exchange, or delivery with employee.</p> <p>Employee shall stay home and monitor for symptoms. If the employee has no symptoms, they can return 10 days after they were tested.</p> <p>If during the 10 days the employee becomes symptomatic, then they must continue to stay home for at least 10 more days from the date of the symptom onset and meet all the following before returning to work:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. They have been fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever reducing medications), and 2. Their other symptoms have improved, and 3. It has been at least 10 days since their symptom onset
B. Employee is sick with symptoms of COVID-19, but has not yet been tested	<p>Do not allow employee to come to work. Arrange alternative methods of communication, exchange, or delivery with employee. Recommend employee be tested. Employee shall stay home until all of the following apply:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. They have been fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever reducing medications), and 2. Their other symptoms have improved, and 3. It has been at least 10 days since their symptom onset <p>If employee is tested, stay home until test results return. Follow Scenario D or E, depending on test results.</p>
C. Employee is sick with symptoms of COVID-19, has been tested but not yet received the test results	<p>Do not allow employee to come to work. Arrange alternative methods of communication, exchange, or delivery with employee. Stay home until test results return. Follow Scenario D or E, depending on test results.</p>

<p>D. Employee is sick with symptoms of COVID-19, has been tested and test results came back <i>negative</i></p>	<p>Employee does not have COVID-19. Follow standard employee illness protocols for returning to work. Example: 24 hours fever-free, or 48 hours after last episode of vomiting or diarrhea, or when on antibiotics for at least 24 hours, or as approved to work by a doctor.</p>
<p>E. Employee is sick with symptoms of COVID-19, has been tested and test results came back <i>positive</i></p>	<p>Do not allow employee to work. Arrange alternative methods of communication, exchange, or delivery with employee. Employee shall stay home until all of the following apply:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. They have been fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever reducing medications), and 2. Their other symptoms have improved, and 3. It has been at least 10 days since their symptom onset
<p>F. Employee has been in <i>close contact</i> with someone who shows symptoms but has not been tested</p>	<p>Employee can continue to work and self-monitor symptoms daily.</p>
<p>G. Employee has been in <i>close contact</i> with someone who shows symptoms and is waiting on test results</p>	<p>Employee can continue to work and self-monitor symptoms daily.</p>
<p>H. Employee has been in <i>close contact</i> with someone who tested positive for COVID-19 (symptomatic or asymptomatic)</p>	<p>Do not allow employee to physically report to work. Arrange alternative methods of communication, exchange, or delivery with employee. Employee must stay home for the full 10 days after <u>last contact with person</u> with no onset of symptoms. If symptoms appear, stay home until all of the following apply:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. They have been fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever reducing medications), and 2. Their other symptoms have improved, and 3. It has been at least 10 days since their symptom onset
<p>I. Employee is living with someone who tested positive for COVID-19</p>	<p>Do not allow employee to physically report to work. Arrange alternative methods of communication, exchange, or delivery with employee. If employee is unable to have complete separation from the person who had a positive COVID test: Self-quarantine for the full 10 days after the person who tested positive ends their isolation. If employee is able to completely separate from the person who tested positive: Self-quarantine for 10 days after last contact with the person who tested positive. If symptoms appear, stay home until all of the following apply:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. They have been fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever reducing medications), and 2. Their other symptoms have improved, and 3. It has been at least 10 days since their symptom onset.



<p>J. Employee is a <i>close contact</i> to someone who tested positive for COVID-19 at work.</p>	<p>Do not allow employee to physically report to work. Arrange alternative methods of communication, exchange, or delivery with employee. Employee shall quarantine for the full 10 days after last contact with person and no symptoms arise. If symptoms appear, stay home until all of the following apply:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. They have been fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever reducing medications) and 2. Their other symptoms have improved and 3. It has been at least 10 days since their symptom onset <p>If employee is tested, stay home until test results return. Follow Scenario D or E, depending on test results.</p>
<p>K. Employee is a <i>close contact</i> to someone who has been exposed to another positive person</p>	<p>Employee can continue to work and self-monitors symptoms daily.</p>
<p>L. Employee lives with or cares for someone who has been exposed to another positive person</p>	<p>Employee can continue to work and self-monitors symptoms daily.</p>

Return to Work Policy For Scenarios

Scenarios A, B, C, E: Doctor’s note or Public Health release NOT required to return to work.

Scenario D: A negative lab result or copy of the negative lab result is not required to return to work. A doctor’s note may be required to return to work based on medical condition and business illness policy.

Scenario F, G, K, L: N/A

Scenario H, I: Employee may not return until the full 10-day quarantine is complete, even if the employee has a negative COVID-19 test during this time. Doctor’s note or Public Health release NOT required to return to work.

Scenario J: Employee may not return until the full 10-day quarantine is complete, even if the employee has a negative COVID-19 test during this time. If they become symptomatic, must follow the symptom criteria for returning to work. Doctor’s note or Public Health release NOT required to return to work.