



COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions for Businesses

1. How do I know if I have an outbreak at my business?

If you have **5 or more** individuals who are laboratory-positive for SARS-CoV-2 by antigen or PCR testing and are epidemiologically linked to the outbreak setting and have illness onset dates or positive SARS-Co-V test (if asymptomatic) within a 14 day period you need to notify the McHenry County Department of Health.

Email the notification to the McHenry County Department of Health at: covidbusiness@mchenrycountyil.gov. For confidentiality, do not include any names of positive individuals in the email. A public health employee will follow up with you.

2. I have an employee who tested positive for COVID-19, what do I do?

Employees who test positive for COVID-19 (using a viral test, not an antibody test) should be excluded from work and remain home in home isolation (see question #3 for home isolation).

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).

Workplaces should instruct employees who were in close contact to the COVID-19 positive individual to stay home for 14 days, telework in possible, and self-monitor for symptoms (see question #3, #4, # 5, and #7).

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. See CDC's [Cleaning and Disinfection for Community Facilities](#) for detailed cleaning instructions.

Critical Infrastructure workplaces should follow the guidance [Implementing Safety Practices for Critical Infrastructure Employees Who May Have Had Exposure to a Person with Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19](#). (See Critical Infrastructure Section)

3. How long does the positive employee need to stay home in isolation?

Persons with COVID-19 who have symptoms and were directed to care for themselves at home may discontinue isolation under the following conditions:

- At least 10 days* have passed since symptom onset **and**
- At least 24 hours have passed since resolution of fever without the use of fever reducing medications **and**
- Other symptoms have improved.

*A limited number of persons with severe illness may produce replication-competent virus beyond 10 days, which may warrant extending duration of isolation for up to 20 days after symptom onset. Consider consultation with infection control experts.



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4. What is the definition of a close contact?

Someone who was within 6 feet on an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period starting from 2 days before illness onset (or, for asymptomatic patients, 2 days prior to specimen collection) until the time the patient is isolated. A close contact is also someone who a positive individual expelled respiratory droplets directly on (e.g. via coughing or sneezing). <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-aresick/quarantine.html>

5. Can I give the name of the positive employee out to other employees?

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). <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019ncov/community/general-business-faq.html>

6. How long is a positive employee contagious?

The infectious period is 2 days before the first day symptoms started (or, for asymptomatic patients, 2 days prior to specimen collection) and

- At least 10 days* have passed since symptom onset **and**
- At least 24 hours have passed since resolution of fever without the use of fever reducing medications **and**
- Other symptoms have improved.

*A limited number of persons with severe illness may produce replication-competent virus beyond 10 days, which may warrant extending duration of isolation for up to 20 days after symptom onset. Consider consultation with infection control experts.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/duration-isolation.html>

7. How long do employees that had close contact to an individual with COVID-19 need to stay home (quarantine) for?

When identifying close contacts, use the close contact definition (see question #4). It is important to know the exact date of when the positive individuals symptoms began (or date specimen was collected if asymptomatic) to determine when the positive employee was at work while infectious and who was in close contact to the positive individual on those infectious days. If you don't have the correct date symptoms began (or correct date specimen was collected if asymptomatic) close contacts could possibly be put in quarantine and not really need to be or close contacts could be missed and not placed in quarantine when they really should be.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine.html>

Close contacts need to quarantine for 14 days after the most recent date of exposure to the positive individual. Recent updates to the CDC and IDPH guidance has provided options for



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release from quarantine to work or attend school. These options are not available to those that work in congregate settings or jails.

MCDH will permit release from the 14 day quarantine to go to work or attend school only, if the following conditions are met:

- this person has not experienced any symptoms since the date they were last known to have been exposed, and
- at least 10 full days have passed since the date of known exposure.
 - Example: if a person was exposed on 12/1/20 (exposure date is considered day 0), they can return to work or school on 12/12/20 if experiencing **no** symptoms.
 - With this strategy, transmission still can occur and estimated at an upper limit of 10%

With this option strict adherence to the following criteria must occur through day 14:

- Correct and consistent mask use,
- social distancing,
- hand and cough hygiene,
- environmental cleaning and disinfection,
- avoiding groups or crowds,
- ensuring adequate indoor ventilation,
- monitoring for symptoms of COVID-19 illness, and
- minimizing contact with persons at increased risk for severe illness, including vulnerable and congregate populations.

The CDC and Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) currently allow release from quarantine and return to work or school using a test based strategy at day 7. MCDH is currently not allowing early release from quarantine to return to work or school under these conditions. MCDH does not allow individuals to test out of quarantine. There is currently conflicting guidance with regards to the type of test that can be used in this scenario. As such, IDPH is currently recommending the use of only molecular tests (RT-PCR and NAAT **NOT** rapid antigen testing) for release from quarantine. Given the current turn-around-time for molecular tests, results would most likely not be available until at least 11 days since last exposure based on when an individual is allowed to get tested after exposure.

8. My employee is in quarantine and tested negative for COVID-19 before the quarantine period is complete, can they come back to work since they tested negative?

No, if an employee is in quarantine they must finish the 14 day quarantine period even if they tested negative for COVID-19 before the quarantine period is finished. The only exception is if they are critical infrastructure employees (see Critical Infrastructure Section) and #7.

9. My employee who is in quarantine tested positive for COVID-19, what happens now? The employee is now positive and would need to isolate at home (see question #3 regarding how long a positive employee needs to stay in home isolation).

10. What are the symptoms of COVID-19?



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People with COVID-19 have had a wide range of symptoms reported—ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness. Symptoms include: fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle aches or body aches, headaches, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting and diarrhea. This list does not include all possible symptoms of COVID-19.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>

11. What should I do if an employee reports COVID-19 symptoms but refuses to get tested? The employee should be treated like a positive individual and follow the home isolation period (see question #3 regarding how long a positive individual needs to stay in home isolation). If the employee is not a close contact to a positive COVID-19 individual and the employee visits their medical provider and the medical provider provides an alternative diagnosis the employee can return when the medical provider authorizes them to return to work.

12. How do you count the isolation and quarantine period?

Isolation: The day symptoms start is day 0. Count forward through day 10 and on day 11, isolation is considered over if the employee has been fever free and feeling better for 24 hours.

Quarantine: The most recent day the close contact was exposed to the positive individual is day 0. Count forward through day 14 and on day 15, quarantine is considered over.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine.html>

13. If I have an employee that was not exposed to anyone with COVID-19 that they are aware of and decided to get tested, can they return to work while waiting for their results?

No, they should remain home until the result comes back negative. If the result is positive follow the home isolation period (see question #3).

14. If an employee tested positive for COVID-19 in the past and was exposed to someone with COVID-19 recently, do they have to quarantine?

If a person has a new exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 and meets all of the following criteria:

1. Has recovered from laboratory-confirmed (PCR or antigen) SARS-CoV-2 infection and has already met criteria to end isolation
2. Is within the first 3 months following the onset of symptoms of their initial confirmed infection, or within the first 3 months of their first positive viral test if they were asymptomatic during initial infection
3. Has remained asymptomatic since the new exposure then that person does not require quarantine or repeat testing for SARS-CoV-2 in the context of this new exposure.

If a person has a new exposure to a person with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 and meets the first two above criteria, but has or develops new symptoms consistent with COVID-19 within 14 days of the new exposure, consultation with a health care provider is recommended, and consultation with infectious disease or infection control experts may be necessary. If an



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alternative cause of the symptoms cannot be identified, retesting for SARS-CoV-2 infection may be warranted. In the absence of clinical evaluation to rule out SARS-CoV-2 reinfection, this person should be isolated for the duration recommended in the memo above – for most persons, this would be 10 days after symptom onset and resolution of fever for at least 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing medications, and with improvement of other symptoms. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/duration-isolation.html>

15. How do I reach someone at the McHenry County Department of Health if I have more questions or concerns?

The McHenry County Department of Health requests you email the McHenry County Business email with any questions at: covidbusiness@mchenrycountyil.gov. A public health employee will follow up with you.

For questions or concerns regarding your business and COVID-19 please email the McHenry County Department of Health at: covidbusiness@mchenrycountyil.gov.

CDC Resource Links:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/businesses-employers.html>

[Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers Responding to Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID19\), May 2020](#)

Critical Infrastructure

1. How do I know if my business is considered critical?



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The Department of Homeland Security developed a list of essential critical infrastructure employees. Visit the cybersecurity and infrastructure security agency website for the document at <https://www.cisa.gov/publication/guidance-essential-critical-infrastructure-workforce>

2. Can employees who are a close contact to positive COVID-19 individual return to work during the quarantine period?

Only if the critical business is in crisis mode meaning the business can't operate without those employees. Those employees can only return to work if they don't have symptoms.

3. Does my critical business need to follow any special measures when letting symptom-free close contacts back to work?

Yes, critical infrastructure employees who have been exposed but remain symptom-free and must return to in-person work should adhere to the following practices before and during their work shift:

- Pre-screen for symptoms which includes checking for a temperature
- Monitor regularly for symptoms
- Wear a [cloth face covering](#)
- Practice social distancing
- Clean and disinfect workspaces

Employees with symptoms should be sent home and should not return to the workplace until they have met the criteria to discontinue home isolation.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019ncov/community/general-business-faq.html>

See the following link 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-safetypractices.html>