

COVID-19 Workplace Exposure

Frequently Asked Questions



Guidance and information is sourced from the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health

An employee reports they have tested positive for COVID-19, what do I do?

- Send the sick employee home right away. If they have symptoms of serious illness such as trouble breathing, pressure or pain in chest, bluish lips or appear confused, call 9-1-1. If the symptoms are mild, ask the employee to call their doctor for medical advice.
- This employee must stay home and self-isolate ([Los Angeles County Home Isolation Instructions](#)) and their close contacts must self-quarantine ([Los Angeles County Home Quarantine Instructions](#)). Isolation is used to separate people infected with the virus from people who are not infected. Quarantine is used to keep someone who might have been exposed to COVID-19 away from others.
- Other employees should assess their previous contact with this employee as well, and if in close contact, that person should start a 14-day period of self-quarantine. Employees who have not had close contact with the employee with COVID-19 while they had symptoms or during the two days prior to the start of symptoms can stay on the job.
- Do note that you cannot legally tell other employees who is sick. It is a violation of patient rights (HIPAA) to reveal private medical information about someone.

What does "close contact" mean?

A "close contact" is any of the following people who were exposed to an "infected person*" while they were infectious:

- An individual who was within 6 feet of the infected person for more than 15 minutes.
- An individual who had unprotected contact with the infected person's body fluids and/or secretions, for example, being coughed or sneezed on, sharing utensils or saliva, or providing care without wearing appropriate protective equipment.

*An infected person is anyone with COVID-19, or who is suspected to have COVID-19, and is considered to be infectious from 48 hours before their symptoms first appeared until they are no longer required to be isolated. Individuals without symptoms that test positive are considered to be infectious from 48 hours before their test was taken until 10 days after their test. Employees who have been in close contact with an individual known to be infectious at the time of contact must self-quarantine at home for 14 days from the point of contact.

When is someone considered recovered and can return to work?

- The home isolation ends when you have had no fever for at least 24 hours (without the use of medicines that reduces fevers) AND your respiratory systems have improved (for example, cough or shortness of breath) AND at least 10 days have passed since your symptoms first appeared.
- If you tested positive for COVID-19 but never had any symptoms, you must stay home for 10 days after your test was taken, but if you develop symptoms, you need to follow the isolation instructions above.
- After completion of isolation or quarantine, according to Health Officer Orders, staff can return to work and resume usual activities. Neither Public Health clearance nor a negative COVID-19 test is required for return to work.

Do I need to report positive cases to the County?

- If there are three or more laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 cases identified at a workplace, the employer must report the cluster to the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health at 888-397-3993 or 213-240-7821.

What if a customer or client shows up with symptoms of illness?

- Depending on the business type, you may be required to do symptoms checks on customers. For example, at hair salons and personal care establishments, customers need to be verbally screened upon arrival, but for retail establishments, symptoms checks for customers are not required. All businesses are required to post signage asking people to stay home if they are ill or have symptoms consistent with COVID-19.

- Post signs requesting that people who are ill visit you online. Provide tissues, trash receptacles, and no-touch hand sanitizer dispensers near entrances. Continue to encourage employees to follow physical (social) distancing guidance, and if they must be closer to the customer, minimize time together to less than 10 minutes. After the client leaves, use cleaning chemicals with EPA-registered disinfectant labels with claims against emerging viral pathogens.

An employee tested positive for COVID-19, how should I clean and disinfect the area where they worked?

In most cases, you do not need to shut down your facility. If it has been less than 7 days since the sick employee has been in the facility, 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.

If it has been 7 days or more since the sick employee used the facility, additional cleaning and disinfection is not necessary. Continue routine cleaning and disinfection of all high-touch surfaces in the facility. Follow the CDC [cleaning and disinfection recommendations](#).

What are resources for employee testing and what do the test results mean?

There is limited access to testing at community testing sites across the County, so employers need to have a plan for testing employees when necessary.

- Employees with insurance can be instructed to call their provider and arrange for testing and then report results to the employer. Employees with no insurance or whose providers cannot provide testing, can call 2-1-1 for help locating a free testing site.

Targeted testing may help:

- Identify unrecognized, asymptomatic COVID-positive employees among those who have had contact with a case so that further spread can be limited or averted.

Targeted testing does NOT however:

- Eliminate the need for investigation to determine who has had contact with a case or for quarantine of close contacts. An individual may test negative soon after exposure and then go on to develop infection, placing those around them during the interval at risk.
- Reveal if a close contact to a COVID-19 case will develop disease. Testing provides information at a single point in time. A person who tests negative during the incubation period (the time period between exposure to disease and disease onset) may subsequently develop disease. This means identified close contacts will need to quarantine/take appropriate precautions for the full 14-day recommended period even if testing is negative.
- As a result, testing does not expedite return to work for close contacts. As mentioned above, a negative test in a close contact does not mean they are not infected. Close contacts may not leave quarantine until they have remained symptom-free for 14 days. Asymptomatic employees with a positive COVID-19 test may be released from isolation and return to work 10 days after the initial positive test, barring the development of symptoms.

Phone numbers and resources

- Los Angeles County Department of Public Health Acute Communicable Disease Control Hotline 888-397-3993—call to report cases and outbreaks of 3 or more
- Los Angeles County Department of Public Health Industry Engagement Hotline 626-430-5320, ehconsultative@ph.lacounty.gov – for businesses and restaurants with questions related to compliance with reopening protocols
- Los Angeles County Department of Public Health Environmental Health Hotline 888-700-9995—for businesses and restaurants with questions regarding enforcement and to report violations and compliance issues
- Los Angeles County Department of Public Health Coronavirus information hotline 877-777-5799
- [Workplace guidance on responding to COVID-19](#)
- [COVID-19 FAQ for Managers](#)
- [Los Angeles County Home Isolation Instructions](#)
- [Los Angeles County Home Quarantine Instructions](#)