

What to Do When Someone at the Workplace Tests Positive for COVID-19

This step-by-step protocol provides guidance to employers when one or more people at the workplace tests positive for COVID-19. This protocol applies to employees as well as volunteers, contractors, or other people who work at the facility. In addition to this protocol, employers must comply with all applicable state and federal laws and any collective bargaining obligations.

When to use this protocol

If the person diagnosed with COVID-19 ever had symptoms, use this protocol if they were symptomatic while at work or developed symptoms within 48 hours of being at work.

If the person diagnosed with COVID-19 never had symptoms, use this protocol if they tested positive within 48 hours of being at work.

Step 1: Provide instructions to the COVID-19-positive worker

Work Exclusion & Isolation Period

The worker should be sent home immediately and instructed to **isolate for 10 days** from the date their symptoms began **AND** 3 days with no fever and respiratory symptoms have improved. The individual may return to the worksite after both of these criteria are met (10/3 rule).

If the worker tested positive but never had any COVID-19 symptoms, they should isolate for 10 days from the date their positive test was done.

Step 2: Identify all close contacts to the COVID-19-positive worker

If an employer learns that an employee has tested positive, the employer should try to determine which, if any, employees had close contact with the positive employee. A **close contact** is defined as someone who was within six feet of the person who tested positive for at least 15 minutes.

Maintain Confidentiality

Employers should keep employees' medical information confidential in accordance with federal and state laws. Do not disclose the identity of the COVID-19 positive worker in your effort to identify close contacts. Please consult with your attorney if you have any questions about applicable employment or privacy laws.

Identify Close Contacts During the Exposure Period

The employer should investigate and document the employee's schedule and work location to determine: 1) the day their symptoms began (if applicable); 2) the date of their first positive test; and 3) the last day that the person diagnosed with COVID-19 was present at the workplace.

This information should then be used by the employer to identify all individuals who may have had close contact with the confirmed-positive employee during the exposure period.

The **exposure period** is defined as:

- **Start:** 2 days before the person had symptoms (or 2 days before date of first positive test for employees who are asymptomatic)
- **End:** last day the positive person was at work

Complete the Case and Contact Data Collection Form

The employer should gather the following information for all people who have been identified as close contacts (to be provided to the Santa Clara County Public Health Department), including any vendors/suppliers, visitors, or others who had close contact with the employee at the worksite.

- Name
- Phone number
- Address
- Language spoken (if not fluent in English)

Employers may also consider instituting a policy informing employees that if they are confirmed to have COVID-19, they will be requested to provide a list of other employees with whom they had close contact during the exposure period.

Step 3: Communicate with All Employees

Work Exclusion, Quarantine & Testing Recommendations for Close Contacts

Anyone who had close contact with the person diagnosed with COVID-19 during the exposure period (defined above) should not be allowed at the worksite and should stay at home for **14 days**, starting the last day that the person diagnosed with COVID-19 was at work.

All close contacts should be tested around 7 days after they last had contact with the COVID-19 case. If the worker does not have a healthcare provider, COVID-19 testing locations can be found on our [website](#). Even if the test is negative, close contacts should remain in quarantine for

the full 14 days. If the close contact was tested before 7 days from their last contact with the case, they should get tested again towards the end of their quarantine period to see if their infection status has changed. Test results, positive or negative, should be shared with the employer.

If a worker who is a close contact to a case cannot (or refuses to) get tested, they should still remain in quarantine for a full 14 days before returning to work.

Provide the COVID-19 [Close Contact Advisory](#) to all close contacts identified.

If you are in one of the following sectors (Fire Departments; Law Enforcement and Community Corrections; 9-1-1 Dispatch; Healthcare Delivery) and compliance with the Public Health Department's isolation and quarantine guidance would compromise your continuity of service, you should contact the Public Health Department for additional guidance.

General Advisory & Symptom Monitoring for All Other Employees

All others present at the workplace, but NOT identified as close contacts, should be advised to **self-monitor for symptoms for 14 days** after the last day that the person diagnosed with COVID-19 was at work. They may return to work, but if they develop symptoms, they should stay home (or if at work, go home immediately) and contact their health care provider to get testing. Everyone at the worksite should ensure they are following the business's [Social Distancing Protocol](#).

If the workplace is a "High-Risk Setting," one where workers are at a high risk for exposure to COVID-19 due to frequent face-to-face interaction with members of the public and inability to maintain physical distancing at work, workers should get tested at least every 30 days. These "High-Risk Setting" workers include, but are not limited to, first responders, pharmacy employees, food service workers, delivery workers, public transportation operators, and grocery store clerks.

If desired, provide the [COVID-19 General Exposure Advisory](#) to all employees who were NOT identified as close contacts.

Step 4: Report Case(s) to the Santa Clara County Public Health Department

If a positive case is identified at your worksite, submit the requested case and contact data through the [Close Contact Data Collection Portal](#). Under the Health Officer Order, employers are

legally required to report this report within four hours after the employer learns of the positive case(s). If you do not have complete information within four hours, you must report the information that you have obtained. You may update the information you provide if you discover additional information after your initial report. The information provided will remain confidential and will not be turned over to immigration authorities.

Step 5: Report Any Hospitalizations or Deaths to the Local Cal/OSHA District Office

Any serious injury, illness, or death occurring in any place of employment or in connection with any employment must be reported by the employer to the local Cal/OSHA district office immediately. For COVID-19, this includes hospitalizations and deaths among employees, even if work-relatedness is uncertain.

- Full details on what information needs to be reported (<https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/report-accident-or-injury.html>), contact information for district offices (<https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/districtoffices.htm>), and the Title 8 section 342 requirement (<https://www.dir.ca.gov/title8/342.html>) are available online.
- Cal/OSHA prefers calls by phone but will also accept email reports (caloshaaccidentreport@tel-us.com).

Step 6: Disinfection Recommendations After a Confirmed COVID-19 Case at the Workplace

Until cleaning and disinfection are completed, close off areas visited by the ill person(s) if the person visited those areas within the last 48 hours. If safe, open outside doors and windows and use ventilating fans to increase air circulation in the area. Wait 24 hours or as long as practical before beginning cleaning and disinfection. Using an EPA-certified cleaning agent, clean and disinfect all areas used by the ill person(s), including offices, bathrooms, common areas, shared electronic equipment (like tablets, touch screens, keyboards, remote controls, and ATM machines), focusing especially on frequently touched surfaces.

Continue routinely cleaning and disinfecting all high-touch areas throughout the day, following [CDC guidelines](#). Clean visibly dirty surfaces and objects using soap and water prior to disinfection. Use an [EPA](#)-approved disinfectant product, and follow the instructions on the label

for proper use, additional PPE needs, and any other special considerations when using the product.

Step 7: Preventing Workplace COVID-19 Transmission

Strictly Enforce Face Covering Use

Face coverings are now mandated in the State of California ([CDPH, 2020](#)). All persons must be instructed to wear their face covering at all times while at the workplace or performing work off-site, especially when interacting with or in a space visited by members of the public, working in a space where food is prepared or packaged, working in or walking through common areas, or in an enclosed area with others and where it is not possible to maintain 6-foot social distancing.

Face coverings are not required for workers while eating or drinking, for workers with a medical condition that prevents wearing a face covering, for communication by or with a person who is hearing impaired, or when the face covering would create a risk to the person related to their work, as determined by local, state, or federal regulators or workplace safety guidelines.

As Appropriate, Restructure the Workplace to Better Support Social Distancing Measures

Reconfigure, restrict, or close common areas to maintain social distancing. Minimum required social distancing measures are identified in the [Social Distancing Protocol](#). Additional measures specific to other industries or activities are included in [Mandatory Directives](#) issued by the Health Officer.

Some basic, preliminary social distancing measures include the following:

- Maximize remote work, based on business functions. Under the Order, businesses must require all workers to work from home if they are able to perform their employer-assigned work duties from home. Certain businesses are required to suspend all on-site operations other than minimum basic operations (like securing the worksite and enabling remote work).
- For those who must remain at the workplace, maintain at least a 6-foot distance from everyone outside your household.
- Limit the number of workers allowed inside your facility at a time to 1 worker per 250 square feet, and limit the number of customers/members of the public allowed inside your facility at a time to 1 person per 150 square feet. These density limitations are required under the Order. Additional limitations may apply depending on the business sector.

- Desks and workspaces should be spaced at least six feet apart and arranged facing the same direction rather than facing each other.
- Any shared desk/work areas should be sanitized between each shift.
- Use of common areas (such as conference rooms, cafeterias, and break rooms) should be minimized and avoided. Breaks should be taken outside whenever possible, and individuals should be encouraged to eat meals outside or at their desks.
- Instead, individuals should be encouraged to eat meals at their desks and to join meetings virtually whenever possible.
- If such common areas are used, place additional limitations on the number of workers in enclosed areas to ensure at least six feet of separation between everyone in the area.
- Stagger personnel breaks, in compliance with wage and hour regulations, to maintain adequate social distancing.
- Eliminate all non-essential in-person meetings and opt for virtual meetings whenever possible; for meetings that must be in-person, arrange to ensure adequate social distancing.

Actively Encourage Adherence to Hygiene Measures

Actively encourage all individuals to increase hygiene measures (hand washing, avoiding contact with eyes/nose/mouth, covering coughs and sneezes), and provide frequent breaks for hand washing. Provide tissues, hand sanitizer, and disinfecting wipes that can be easily accessed throughout the facility. Employers must ensure that hand sanitizer dispensers and handwashing facilities are always operational and stocked.

Print out and post educational materials throughout the workplace. Printable materials are available at: <https://www.sccgov.org/sites/covid19/Pages/learn-what-to-do-flyers.aspx>

Implement Routine Cleaning Measures

Clean

- See the CDC guidance "[Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility](#)" for specific guidance in cleaning and disinfecting indoor and outdoor areas.
- If surfaces are dirty, they should be cleaned using a detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.
- All workers must wash hands regularly and be provided with frequent handwashing breaks.

Disinfect

- Employers should ensure that routine disinfection is conducted using one of the following:
 - [EPA-registered household disinfectant](#), per manufacturer's recommendations;
 - Alcohol solution with at least 60% alcohol; or
 - Diluted household bleach solutions (if appropriate for the surface)
- Routinely clean and disinfect high-touch items (door handles, handrails, light switches, telephones, keyboards, etc.) throughout the day.

Additional Recommendations

- Provide disposable wipes so that commonly used surfaces (for example, doorknobs, keyboards, remote controls, desks, other work tools and equipment) can be wiped down by employees before each use.
- Discourage workers from using other workers' phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment, when possible. If necessary, clean and disinfect them before and after use.

Ensure Strict Adherence to Social Distancing Protocol and Industry-Specific Directives

All businesses are required to complete and implement a [Social Distancing Protocol](#) and submit it to the County using the online form. Additional measures specific to other industries or activities are included in [Mandatory Directives](#) issued by the Health Officer.

Periodically revisit your facilities' Protocol to determine whether any measures should be updated to enhance workplace safety. Ensure that all personnel are properly trained on the Protocol and that the Protocol measures are being strictly implemented and followed.