



PLAN FOR WHEN EMPLOYEES BECOME ILL WITH COVID-19 AND HOW TO SAFELY RETURN THEM TO THE WORKPLACE

All businesses in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts must have a written control plan outlining how its workplace complies with the mandatory safety standards for operation in the COVID-19 reopening period. One of the required procedures is a plan on what to do if an employee becomes ill from COVID-19 while at work and when to allow an employee to return to work after recovery from a COVID-19 related illness.

An Employee Becomes Ill at Work

If an employee develops COVID-19-like symptoms while at work, the CDC recommends the following procedures be implemented:

- Immediately **isolate** the employee from other staff and visitors;
- **Notify** by phone or email the employee's supervisor that the employee is displaying COVID-19-like symptoms at work;
- **Instruct** the employee to contact the employee's healthcare provider; and
- Immediately **send** the employee (or arrange for employee to be sent) home.

Employers should encourage employees who test positive for COVID-19 to disclose test results for the purposes of cleaning/disinfecting the workplace and contact tracing. Once on notice of an employee's positive COVID-19 test result, an employer must notify the local Board of Health in the locality where the workplace is located and assist the local Board of Health in order to advise other employees who may have come in contact with the employee who tested positive for COVID-19 and, as a result, who may need to isolate and self-quarantine.

Additional information regarding the steps to take if an employee develops COVID-19-like symptoms while at work can be found on the CDC's website.

Plans for an Employee to Return to Work

The CDC's guidance on when an employee can return to work varies on whether the employee exhibited COVID-19-like symptoms, tested positive for COVID-19 or was exposed to an individual with COVID-19.

If the employee has been advised by a healthcare provider to be tested for COVID-19, the employee should get a test and then follow the CDC's current guidance for returning to work after being tested.

- **An employee who exhibited COVID-19-like symptoms** must meet the CDC's current guidance in order to return to work:
 - At least **24 hours** have passed since the fever resolved without the use of fever-reducing medications; and
 - There has been improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); and
 - At least ten days have passed since the symptoms first appeared.

• **An employee who tested positive for COVID-19 but has no symptoms** cannot return to work until cleared to return by the employee’s health care provider and meets the CDC’s current guidance to discontinue quarantine, as follows:

- **Confirm that 10 days have passed since being tested; and**
- **Has been asymptomatic since being tested.**

• **An employee who developed symptoms after testing positive** should follow the CDC’s current guidance for return to work for employees who exhibited COVID-19-like symptoms.

• **An employee who was exposed to COVID-19 and advised to self-quarantine** by a healthcare provider or local Board of Health **and has no symptoms** must quarantine for 14 days after exposure. The employee can return to work at the end of the 14-day quarantine if the employee did not develop symptoms during the quarantine period. An employee who develops symptoms during the 14-day quarantine period should follow the CDC’s criteria for return to work for employees who exhibited COVID-19-like symptoms.

• **An employee who was directed to self-quarantine at home** by a healthcare provider or the local Board of Health **and later developed COVID-19-like symptoms** should follow the CDC’s criteria for return to work for employees who exhibited COVID-19-like symptoms.

Additional information can be found at the CDC’s website.

Additional Employer Responsibility

If an employee is diagnosed with COVID-19, OSHA requires that the employer conduct an assessment on whether the employee’s COVID-19 illness was work-related. (See prior Alert.) The CDC’s guidance should be routinely checked for updated information.



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