

**Office of the Director**

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[www.kingcounty.gov/health](http://www.kingcounty.gov/health)

To Whom It May Concern:

**Public Health – Seattle & King County strongly discourages employers from requiring a negative COVID-19 test result or doctor’s note for employees diagnosed with COVID-19 to return to work, after they have completed a 10-day isolation period and symptom-based criteria for ending isolation.**

A required negative test result or doctor’s note is not necessary to return to work after a 10-day isolation because isolation is an effective method to stop the spread of COVID-19. Additionally, people can have positive COVID-19 test results even after they have recovered and are no longer contagious.

Requiring a negative test result after 10 days puts an unnecessary burden on employees and the healthcare system.

**Guidelines from CDC about Isolation, Quarantine, and Returning to Work:**

| <b>Employee’s situation</b>   | <b>Steps to take</b>   | <b>When to return to work (if applicable)</b>   |
|---|--|---|
| Tests positive for COVID-19   | Isolate for 5 days after their symptoms began  | If they have no symptoms, they may return to work after 5 days and should continue to wear a high quality, well-fitting mask around others for 5 additional days.<br><br>Optional:<br>If they have access to a test and want to test as an extra safeguard, they should test towards the end of the 5-day isolation period using a rapid antigen test if possible. <b>If their test is positive, they should continue to isolate for another 5 days (for a total of 10).</b> If their test result is negative, they may return to work and should continue to wear a well-fitting mask around others. |
| Exposed to COVID-19 and NOT up-to-date on vaccinations and boosters | Quarantine for 5 days and test on Day 5 with a rapid antigen test if possible.   | If they test negative or do not have symptoms, after five days they can return to work and continue to wear a high-quality, well-fitting mask around others for five more days.   |
| Exposed to COVID-19 and are up-to-date on vaccinations and boosters | Do not need to quarantine and should wear a high quality, well-fitting mask around others for 10 days after the exposure and test on day 5 with a rapid antigen test, if possible. |   |

Please visit the Public Health web page [COVID-19 quarantine and isolation guidance](https://kingcounty.gov/covid/quarantine) (kingcounty.gov/covid/quarantine) for detailed information about when and how long employees should stay home.

It is also important that everyone wears a mask in indoor public places, regardless of their vaccination status. Masking is particularly important for people who just completed isolation and those exposed to COVID-19 to avoid infecting others.

If you have any questions, please contact the Public Health Call Center at 206-477-3977 (open 7 days a week, 8 AM – 7 PM), interpreters available.

Thank you.