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Public Health
Seattle & King County

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 5-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 5-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 5 days puts an unnecessary burden on employees and the healthcare system.

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

Employee's situation	Steps to take	When to return to work (if applicable)
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. Optional: 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. **If their test is positive, they should continue to isolate for another 5 days (for a total of 10).** 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 regardless of vaccination status	Wear a high-quality mask for 10 days and get tested on day 5.	If they have no symptoms, they may continue to report for work. They should wear a high-quality, well-fitting mask around others for 10 days after the exposure, distance from others, avoid crowded places and stay away from people at high risk for COVID-19. If they test positive for COVID-19, they should follow the guidance above.

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

It is also recommended 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.

Thank you.