

What should I do if a food worker is diagnosed with COVID-19?

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The following is the information needed and steps to take in the event that a food worker has been tested positive for COVID-19.

- 1. Immediately send the sick employee home.** A person who has tested positive for COVID-19 should remain under home isolation precautions for **at least 10 days after symptoms begin AND at least 24 hours** after fever is gone and symptoms get better, whichever is longer.
- 2. Identify staff that may have been exposed to the COVID-19 positive worker** (include up to 2 days before the worker's symptoms began, through their last work shift). Any staff that HAVE been in close contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19 but who have NO SYMPTOMS are STRONGLY ENCOURAGED to STAY HOME from work for 14 days after their last close contact and quarantine themselves. They should watch for symptoms: cough, shortness of breath, or difficulty breathing, fever, chills, muscle pain, sore throat, or a new loss of taste or smell. This list is not all possible symptoms. Close contact usually includes **being within 6 feet (2 meters) of a sick person with COVID-19 for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over the course of 24 hours.**

Please see the King County [Isolation and Quarantine](#) page for the current guidance for fully vaccinated staff.

If it is not possible to complete a full 14-day quarantine, the following are additional quarantine options:

1. Stay in quarantine for **14 days** after your last contact. **This is the safest option and is HIGHLY RECOMMENDED.**
2. If this is not possible, stay in quarantine for **10 days** after your last contact, without additional testing.
3. If the first two options are not possible, stay in quarantine for 7 full days beginning after your last contact **and** if you receive a negative test result (get tested no sooner than day-5 after your last contact). *This will depend on availability of testing resources and may not be recommended in some settings.*

If your close contact workers are following quarantine options #2 or #3, Public Health asks that you include additional information in your business COVID Prevention and Control Plan. For the list of requirements for COVID Prevention Plans, see: <https://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/health/covid-19/workplaces/food-establishments/~media/depts/health/communicable-diseases/documents/C19/required-info-covid-prevention-plan.ashx>

- 3.** If staff have **not been in close contact** with the sick person, and are **not** sick, they are considered to be at low risk for infection. They can continue to go to work but should monitor their health for 14 days and stay away from others if they get sick.

4. If staff **have symptoms**, but **have not been exposed** to someone with COVID-19 and have **not tested positive** for COVID-19, they should stay home away from others and avoid public places until **24 hours** after the fever is gone and symptoms get better.

5. If workers have symptoms of COVID-19, they should get tested. If they don't have a doctor, call the King County COVID-19 Call Center at 206-477-3977 for assistance. If they do have a doctor, call them to get a test.

Free COVID testing sites: <https://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/health/covid-19/testing.aspx>

6. Cleaning, sanitizing and ventilation:

- If possible, wait 24 hours from the last time the sick employee was in the facility, before cleaning and sanitizing the area the worker spent most of their time, to minimize potential exposure for other employees.
- During this period, open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in these areas.

Continue routinely cleaning and sanitizing all food preparation surfaces in the facility, and disinfect non-food preparation high touch surfaces, such as restrooms, floors, door handles, keypads, etc. Follow CDC cleaning and disinfection recommendations for non- food preparation surfaces.

7. Reporting cases and protecting employees' privacy:

Food businesses **must notify Public Health within 24 hours** if you **suspect COVID is spreading** in your workplace **or if there are two or more confirmed or suspected cases** among your employees in a 14-day period. At this time, food business employers are highly encouraged to report single cases of COVID-19 among employees to Public Health – Seattle & King County.

If one of your employees has been diagnosed with COVID-19 and may have been in close contact with others while infectious, notify other employees they may have been exposed, **but do not identify the person who is sick**. Report COVID cases online at:

<https://redcap.iths.org/surveys/index.php?s=C48H3AKJWR>

Or call 206-477-3977 (daily, 8am-7pm.)

Please review employee health policies and procedures with staff. **Employee health policies should prohibit food workers from working in food establishments while sick.**

The following are links to a King County Public Health handout on recommendations for food establishments as well as original document sources for the above information.

- [Guidelines for restaurants and other food businesses](#)
- [What to do if you have confirmed or suspected coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [What to do if you were potentially exposed to someone with confirmed coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [What to do if you have symptoms of coronavirus disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) and have not been around anyone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19](#)
- [Food Worker and Establishment Guidance on COVID-19](#)
- [What to do if an Employee has COVID-19 and What Not to Do](#)