

Office of the Director

401 Fifth Avenue, Suite 1300
Seattle, WA 98104-1818

206-296-4600 Fax 206-296-0166
TTY Relay: 711

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 the recommended time- and symptom-based criteria for ending isolation. Per Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines, individuals who test positive for COVID-19 or who are exposed to COVID-19 should complete the following isolation and quarantine protocols:

- If an employee tested positive for COVID-19 and had symptoms, they may return to work 10 days after their symptoms first appeared *and* their symptoms have improved *and* they have gone 24 hours without fever (and not using a fever-reducing medication).
- People who had severe illness from COVID-19 (admitted to the hospital and needed oxygen) or who are immunocompromised may need to stay home longer than 10 days; their healthcare providers will advise them on when it is safe to return to work. Public Health is available to consult with healthcare providers in those cases.
- If an employee tested positive for COVID-19 but do not have symptoms, they can return to work 10 days after the test.
- If an employee was exposed to someone with COVID-19 and does not have symptoms, Public Health recommends the following:
 - Stay in quarantine for 14 days after their last contact. This is the safest option.
 - If this is not possible, stay in quarantine for 10 days after their last contact, without additional testing.
 - If the first two options are not possible, stay in quarantine for 7 full days beginning after their last contact **and** if they receive a negative test result (get tested no sooner than 5 days after their last contact). This option depends on availability of testing resources and may not be recommended in some settings.

After following proper isolation or quarantine protocols, individuals may safely return to work. A required test or doctor’s note is not necessary to return to work because isolation and quarantine are effective methods 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 puts an unnecessary burden on employees and the health care system.

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.