



Duration of Isolation and Precautions for Adults with COVID-19

One of the many difficult questions employers face in dealing with the COVID-19 crisis is when and under what circumstances may employees safely return to work after having contracted COVID-19. Many employers have required employees to provide negative test results from at least two specimens collected more than 24 hours apart. Unfortunately, with the recent spikes in COVID-19 in Florida and many other states, this “test-based strategy” can be challenging as it is more difficult for people to get tested and it is taking longer to process test results.

In response, the CDC recently revised its guidance to emphasize an alternative approach – a “symptom-based strategy” – for discontinuing home isolation for symptomatic persons with confirmed or suspected COVID-19. Under this strategy, persons may discontinue isolation and return to work if all three of the following conditions have been met:

1. At least 10 days have passed *since symptoms first appeared*; **and**
2. At least 24 hours have passed *since last fever* without the use of fever-reducing medications; **and**
3. All COVID-related symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath) have improved.

The CDC previously required people to wait 72 hours since their last fever, and the CDC changed the focus from improvement of just “respiratory symptoms” to improvement of all COVID-related symptoms (due to the ever increasing list of COVID-related symptoms). Hopefully, the emphasis on this approach and the CDC’s revisions to it will allow employees who no longer have symptoms to return to work sooner.

For more specific information on the CDC’s recommendations for discontinuing home isolation and to monitor the CDC’s guidance for additional updates, [click here](#). Notably, the CDC’s “time-based strategy” remains applicable for persons who are asymptomatic but have tested positive (i.e., at least 10 days have passed since the date of first positive test assuming they have not subsequently developed symptoms), and the “test-based strategy” is still viable in all situations. Also note that the CDC has more rigorous requirements for discontinuing home isolation and returning employees to work for healthcare settings.