

## **CDC Updates to COVID-19 Testing and Return from Isolation**

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At the onset and throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, IRMA has remained vigilant in monitoring and distributing updates from local, state, and federal authorities. Previously, in accordance with CDC and IDPH guidance, IRMA relayed recommendations to allow those suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 to only return being around others (end at-home isolation) once two (2) tests taken 24 hours apart came back negative. The CDC removed the two (2) test protocol in August.

As of September 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020, the CDC has updated its recommendations (below) to include a 14 day quarantine for exposures. In addition, the new guidelines provide a 10 day quarantine for those persons who have been exposed, but previously recovered from COVID-19 in the past 3 months. These persons can return to work as long as they are fever free for 24 hours.

### **CDC Guidance on When to End Home Isolation:**

***I think or know I had COVID-19, and I had symptoms. You can be around others (end home isolation):***

- **10 days** since symptoms first appeared **and**
- **24 hours** with no fever without the use of fever-reducing medications **and**
- COVID-19 symptoms have improved (for example, cough, shortness of breath)

*Most people do not require testing to decide when they can be around others; however, if your healthcare provider recommends testing, they will let you know when you can resume being around others based on your test results.*

*Note that these recommendations **do not** apply to persons with severe COVID-19 or with severely weakened immune systems (immunocompromised). These persons should follow the guidance below for ["I was severely ill with COVID-19 or have a severely weakened immune system \(immunocompromised\) due to a health condition or medication. When can I be around others?"](#)*

***I tested positive for COVID-19 but had no symptoms:***

- *If you continue to have no symptoms, you can be with others after **10 days** have passed since you had a positive viral test for COVID-19.*

*Most people do not require testing to decide when they can be around others; however, if your healthcare provider recommends testing, they will let you know when you can resume being around others based on your test results.*

*If you develop symptoms after testing positive, follow the guidance above for ["I think or know I had COVID-19, and I had symptoms."](#)*

Consistent with [CDC's recommendations](#), workers with COVID-19 symptoms should be referred to a healthcare provider for evaluation and potential testing. Waiting for test results prior to returning to work is preferred to keep potentially infected workers out of the workplace.

### **I was around a person with COVID-19**

- Anyone who has had close contact with someone with COVID-19 (any individual within 6 feet of an affected person for at least 15 minutes) should stay home for **14 days** after their last exposure to that person.

However, anyone who has had close contact with someone with COVID-19 and who:

- *Developed COVID-19 illness within the previous 3 months **and***
- *Has recovered **and***
- *Remains without COVID-19 symptoms (for example, cough, shortness of breath)*

**Does not need to stay home.**

Depending on the timing of when a test is administered, a negative test result may not mean a negative case. New information from the CDC and Whitehouse.gov indicates that a negative test may only show that an individual did not have COVID-19 at the time of testing; having tested too early from the onset of the infection. IRMA has yet to find guidance directly from the CDC on the exact number of days an individual should wait to get tested post an exposure. Initial studies (resourced below) have shown the largest reduction of false negative tests occur five days after the exposure. For this reason, the CDC has recommended that individuals, regardless of test results, should still follow the guidance on home isolation to [protect themselves and others](#).

IRMA will continue to recommend that individuals follow the CDC's 10-day isolation for confirmed or symptomatic COVID-19 cases, 14-day quarantine periods for those exposed to a known case and follow up with their healthcare provider for guidance on further testing. While the CDC has removed the 2 negative test recommendation, it does not preclude employers from requiring a negative test after 10-14 days of isolation as part of their return to work protocols. Data to date shows that a person who has had and recovered from COVID-19 may have low levels of virus in their bodies for up to 3 months after diagnosis. This means that if the person who has recovered from COVID-19 is retested within 3 months of the initial infection, they may continue to have a positive test result, even though they are not spreading COVID-19. Therefore, the important indicators of infection recovery are being fever free for 24 hours and an improvement in COVID-19 symptoms. Any symptoms of COVID-19 should be reported to the employer immediately. Employees should be sent home to begin isolation and to consult their healthcare provider on initiating testing.

#### **Resources:**

[CDC - When You Can Be Around Others](#)

[CDC - When to Quarantine](#)

[SARS-CoV-2 Testing Strategy: Considerations for Non-Healthcare Workplaces](#)

[Testing individuals with signs or symptoms consistent with COVID-19](#)

[Testing asymptomatic individuals with recent known or suspected exposure to SARS-CoV-2 to control transmission](#)

[Testing asymptomatic individuals without known or suspected exposure to SARS-CoV-2 for early identification in special settings](#)

[IDPH - Instructions for Individuals Undergoing Testing, Including Healthcare Workers & First Responders](#)

[WHITEHOUSE.GOV - GUIDANCE ON INTERPRETING COVID-19 TEST RESULTS](#)

[How to get tested for current COVID-19 infection](#)

[Testing FAQ](#)

[Variation in False-Negative Rate of Reverse Transcriptase Polymerase Chain Reaction–Based SARS-CoV-2 Tests by Time Since Exposure](#)