



CUMBERLAND COUNTY NORTH CAROLINA

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions For Employers

COVID-19 resources for business

- [CDC Guidance for Businesses and Workplaces](#)
- [CDC General Business Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [CDC Implementing Safety Practices for Critical Infrastructure Workers Who May Have Had Exposure to a Person with Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19](#)
- [North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Guidance for Businesses](#)
- [North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Guidance for Restaurants](#)

My employee informed me they tested positive. What do I do now?

The health department will work with the positive individual to identify close contacts at the workplace as well as outside of the workplace. Federal and state confidentiality laws allow us to work with employers to prevent the spread of communicable diseases in the workplace. We may need to work with you to determine which employees or customers have had close contacts with the employee with COVID-19 and who may need to take additional precautions, including exclusion from work and remaining at home. We appreciate your cooperation with us!

The health department will inform any identified close contacts of their exposure and refer them for testing six days after their last exposure to the positive individual. In most instances, close contacts will be excluded from work for 14 days from their last exposure to the individual that tested positive. The timeframe for having contact with an individual includes the period of time of 48 hours before the individual became symptomatic or when they were tested. There are [exceptions](#) for asymptomatic employees working in critical infrastructure roles.

If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19, employers should inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace but maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). You should not release the name or unnecessary information that would identify the individual(s) who tested positive.

Follow the [CDC cleaning and disinfection recommendations](#).

My employee's household family member is sick and being tested. Does my employee need to stay home from work? Do I notify my other employees?

If an individual in the employee's household was tested because they have COVID-19 symptoms, NC DHHS recommends everyone in the household stay at home until the results are known. There are [exceptions](#) for asymptomatic employees working in critical infrastructure roles.

If their household member was tested for COVID-19 but does not have symptoms and no known or suspected exposure to someone with COVID19 (for example, as part of a workplace screening program), neither the household member nor the employee need to stay home while waiting for their results

You do not need to inform your employees at this time. They do not have a known exposure to the positive individual. Maintaining confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) is important)

Do I need to notify my customers?

The health department will work with you and your employee(s) to conduct a case investigation and identify close contacts who may have been at risk of exposure. We will work with you to notify customers who have been identified as close contacts. If we are unable to identify customers who are at risk, the health department may make public notification to notify individuals of their risk. We will not release any identifying information about the employee and will include the minimum information necessary to protect the health of the public.

Implementing social distancing measures (physical barriers, keeping a six-foot distance, etc.) and wearing a face covering will help reduce the risk of exposure to customers!

My employee is sick and left the workplace to get tested. What should my employee do while they wait for their test results?

If you have **any COVID-19 symptoms**, were tested because you were **exposed to someone with COVID-19**, or you **suspect you may have been exposed to COVID-19**, you should stay home and, as much as possible, avoid others in your household. In addition, if you were tested because you have COVID-19 symptoms, everyone in your household should stay at home as much as possible until your results are known.

If you were tested for COVID-19 but have no symptoms and no known or suspected exposure to someone with COVID19 (for example, as part of a workplace screening program), you do not need to stay home while waiting for your results unless you are told to do so by your employer or by a public health official.

Can you provide my employee with a return to work letter?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends “employers should not require sick employee to provide a negative COVID-19 test result or healthcare provider’s note to return to work.” Employees with COVID-19 who have stayed home can stop home isolation and return to work when they have met one of the following sets of criteria:

For symptomatic positive employees

- The employee has had no fever for at least 72 hours (that is, 3 full days of no fever without the use medicine that reduces fevers)
- AND

- respiratory symptoms have improved (for example, cough or shortness of breath have improved)
AND
- at least 10 days have passed since their symptoms first appeared

For asymptomatic positive employees:

Persons with laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 who have not had any symptoms and were directed to care for themselves at home may discontinue isolation under the following conditions:

At least 10 days have passed since the date of their first positive COVID-19 diagnostic test assuming they have not subsequently developed symptoms since their positive test. There are [exceptions](#) for asymptomatic employees working in critical infrastructure roles.

Close contacts to a lab-confirmed positive individual:

14 days after their last exposure to the individual who tested positive.

If your employee tests positive or is required to remain at home because they are household close contact we can provide a note to return to work. **However, please note due to increased testing and demand, it may take several days to produce the note. Employees may be able to produce other documentation in a more timely manner (a note from their daycare provider indicating a positive case, a copy of their lab results, etc.).**

Should I require two negative tests for my employee to return to work? My employee keeps testing positive, what should I do?

There are several strategies to discontinue isolation for employees have tested positive. One strategy is a test-based strategy. This strategy requires two consecutive negative COVID-19 tests, using a FDA approved molecular test. The two consecutive respiratory specimens should be collected at least 24 hours apart. This strategy is based on the availability of testing supplies, laboratory capacity, and access to testing. Due to increased demand for testing, gaining access to repeat testing may not be feasible for many individuals.

Emerging evidence shows that some individuals may continue to test positive for COVID-19 for an extended period after their symptoms resolve and they have recovered. The positive tests results may not mean they are still infectious and can still spread the virus to others in the workplace.

Should I tell my other employees their co-worker has tested positive and they have been exposed?

The health department will work with the positive individual and the employee, as needed, to identify close contacts in the workplace. While maintaining confidentiality of the positive individual, we will notify all close contacts of their exposure, refer them for testing, and provide them with information about their quarantine period.

The CDC recommends “If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19, employers should inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace but maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).”

My employee was identified as a close contact and put on 14 day quarantine. They tested negative and are not having any symptoms can they go back to work?

If you were tested because of a known contact to someone with COVID-19, you should stay home and quarantine (avoid anyone in your household) until 14 days after the last time you were in contact with the person who tested positive. Having a negative test during that period is a good thing, but there is still a chance that it may take up to 14 days after exposure to COVID-19 for the virus to present itself and infect someone.

I work in a critical infrastructure industry. Can my employees come back to work after they have been exposed?

To ensure continuity of operations of essential functions, CDC advises that critical infrastructure workers may be permitted to continue work following potential exposure to COVID-19, provided they remain asymptomatic and additional precautions are implemented to protect them and the community.

Critical infrastructure workers who have been exposed but remain symptom-free and must return to in-person work should adhere to the following practices before and during their work shift:

- Pre-screen for symptoms
- Monitor regularly for symptoms
- Wear a face mask
- Practice social distancing
- Clean and disinfect workspaces

Sick employees should be sent home and should not return to the workplace until they have met the criteria to discontinue home isolation.

See [Implementing Safety Practices for Critical Infrastructure Workers Who May Have Had Exposure to a Person with Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19](#) for more information.

The Department of Homeland Security developed a [list](#) of essential critical infrastructure workers to help state and local officials as they work to protect their communities, while ensuring continuity of functions critical to public health and safety as well as economic and national security. State and local officials make the final determinations for their jurisdictions about critical infrastructure workers.

My employee tested positive, do I need to shut down my facility?

In most cases, you do not need to shut down your facility. But do close off any areas used for prolonged periods of time by the sick person:

- Wait 24 hours before cleaning and disinfecting to minimize potential for other employees being exposed to respiratory droplets. If waiting 24 hours is not feasible, wait as long as possible.
- During this waiting period, open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in these areas.

Follow the [CDC cleaning and disinfection recommendations](#):

- Clean dirty surfaces with soap and water before disinfecting them
- To disinfect surfaces, use [products that meet EPA criteria for use against SARS-CoV-2](#)~~external icon~~[external icon](#), the virus that causes COVID-19, and are appropriate for the surface.
- Always wear gloves and gowns appropriate for the chemicals being used when you are cleaning and disinfecting.
- You may need to wear additional personal protective equipment (PPE) depending on the setting and disinfectant product you are using.

In addition to cleaning and disinfecting, employers should determine which employees may have been exposed to the virus and need to take additional precautions:

- Most workplaces should follow the [Public Health Recommendations for Community-Related Exposure](#).

If it has been less than 7 days since the sick employee used the facility, clean and disinfect all areas used by the sick employee following the [CDC cleaning and disinfection recommendations](#).

If it has been 7 days or more since the sick employee used the facility, additional cleaning and disinfection is not necessary. Continue routinely cleaning and disinfecting all high-touch surfaces in the facility.

Can I give you the name(s) of my employee and you tell me if they tested positive?

No, this would be a violation of our federal and state confidentiality and privacy laws.

My employee received an antibody tested and test positive. What should I do now?

CDC does NOT recommend that employers use [antibody tests](#) to determine which employees can work. Antibody tests check a blood sample for **past infection** with SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. **CDC does not yet know if people who recover from COVID-19 can get infected again.** [Viral tests](#) check a respiratory sample (such as swabs of the inside of the nose) for **current infection** with SARS-CoV-2.

CDC has published [strategies](#) for consideration of incorporating viral testing for SARS-CoV-2 into a workplace COVID-19 preparedness, response, and control plan.

Where can I send my employee for testing?

We have a list of test sites in Cumberland County available on our website. Individuals should call in advance to verify cost and testing criteria.

<http://co.cumberland.nc.us/departments/public-health-group/public-health/testing-and-collection-sites>

Testing by Cumberland County Health Department is available on Tuesdays and Thursdays, by appointment only.

On **Tuesdays**, test collection will be conducted at:

Manna Church
5117 Cliffdale Road
Fayetteville, NC 28314
9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

On **Thursdays**, test collection will be conducted at:

Cumberland County Health Department
1235 Ramsey Street, Fayetteville, NC, 28301
9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

*Testing locations, dates, times, and criteria may change. Please check our website for the most recent updates.

Testing is free. appointments are available for those individuals over the age of 13 who meet the following criteria.

1. Any individual over the age of 13 experiencing COVID-19 symptoms*
2. Individuals without symptoms but who have been in close contact (within 6 feet for 15 minutes or longer) with someone who tested positive COVID-19 in the last 14 days. If you are not having symptoms, you should wait 6 days after your last exposure to get tested.
3. Regardless of symptoms, anyone over the age of 13, at higher risk of exposure or at higher risk for severe disease
 - Persons who live or work in a long-term care facility, homeless shelter, correctional facility, or migrant farmworker camp
 - People over age 65
 - [People with underlying health conditions who are at high risk for severe illness](#)
 - Persons from historically marginalized populations
 - Healthcare workers or first responders (e.g. EMS, law enforcement, fire department, military)

- Front-line and essential workers (grocery store clerks, gas station attendants, childcare staff, etc.) in settings where social distancing is difficult to maintain. Individuals who have attended protests, rallies, or other mass gatherings in crowds where it is difficult to practice effective social distancing.

My employee traveled or is traveling to the beach or to a hotspot. Should I tell them to stay home from work.

See the [CDC considerations for travel](#). Follow state and local travel restrictions. For up-to-date information and travel guidance, check the [state or local health department](#) where you are, along your route, and at your planned destination. While you are traveling, it is possible a state or local government may put into place travel restrictions, such as stay-at-home or shelter-in-place orders, mandated quarantines upon arrival, or even state border closures. Plan to keep checking for updates as you travel.

Currently, North Carolina does not require individuals coming from other states to quarantine for 14 days.

How about face coverings?

Under Governor Cooper’s Executive Order 147, people are now required to wear face coverings in public spaces, whether inside or outside, where physical distancing of six feet is not possible. This includes but is not limited to retail businesses, restaurants, personal care, grooming, and tattoo businesses, child care facilities (child care, day camps, and overnight camps), transportation, meat and poultry processing plants, and long term care facilities. Read more about the Executive Order includes exceptions for wearing face coverings [here](#).

CDC recommends all people 2 years of age and older wear a cloth face covering in public settings and when around people who don’t live in your household, especially when other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain.

Cloth face coverings should not be worn by:

- Children younger than 2 years old
- Anyone who has trouble breathing
- Anyone who is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the cloth face covering without assistance

Cloth face coverings are not surgical masks or respirators. Currently, those are critical supplies that should continue to be reserved for healthcare workers and other medical first responders.

See additional guidance from the CDC regarding face coverings [here](#).

I know of a business that is not following the Governor’s Executive Orders. Who do I report it to? Citations under this Section shall be written only to businesses or organizations that fail to enforce the requirement to wear Face Coverings. Law enforcement personnel are not

authorized to criminally enforce the Face Covering requirements of this Executive Order against individual workers, customers, or patrons.

Other executive orders can be enforced by state and local law enforcement officers. Read more about the enforcement of executive orders [here](#).

While the health department cannot enforce the executive orders, we can provide education and technical assistance to businesses as needed.

How can I reduce the spread of COVID-19 for my employees?

Please view resources from the CDC and NC DHHS

- [CDC Guidance for Businesses and Workplaces](#)
- [CDC General Business Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Guidance for Businesses](#)
- [North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Guidance for Restaurants](#)