



TO: All Employers in Alameda County
FROM: Nicholas J. Moss, MD, MPH, Health Office
SUBJECT: Return to Work Guidelines for Cases and Close Contacts

The Alameda County Public Health Department (ACPHD) is committed to ensuring the health and safety of everyone who lives or works in Alameda County. We appreciate your compliance with State and local requirements for workplace safety, including requiring the use of face coverings, ensuring everyone stays 6 feet apart, conducting regular symptom checks, and supporting sick employees in staying home.

COVID-19 is widespread in our community and you may have employees who get the virus. Per our Health Officer Orders, people with COVID-19 are required to stay home and away from others in isolation for at least 10 days. On day 11, if they no longer have a fever and other symptoms have improved, they can leave isolation and return to work. **ACPHD strongly recommends employers allow people with COVID-19 to return to work 10 days after symptom onset (or from first positive test if no symptoms).**

Vaccinated people who are not experiencing symptoms do not need to quarantine but should monitor for symptom development for 14 days. Unvaccinated people in close contact with someone with COVID-19 are required to stay home in quarantine. There are two options for determining the length of quarantine.

Option 1: You should stay home for 10 days following exposure if you are not getting a COVID test.

Option 2: You should stay home for 7 days and can release on day 8 if you have a negative COVID test (test must occur on day 5 or later). If your result is positive, or you develop any symptoms of COVID, you must immediately isolate and contact your healthcare provider of the public health department for isolation guidance.

Most people in close contact with someone with COVID-19 are required to stay home in quarantine for at least 10 days after the last date of contact. On day 11, if they never developed symptoms, they could leave quarantine and return to work. Some groups should adhere to a 14-day quarantine; this includes people who are in close contact with persons at high risk of severe disease of COVID-19 (for example, patients with type II diabetes or undergoing cancer treatment), as well as people who live or work in congregate facilities (for example, jails, and nursing homes). We advise against requiring a negative test to return to work for people who have completed their **quarantine**.

These recommendations are the public health standard based on scientific evidence and guidance from the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Repeat testing for people who have previously tested positive is not necessary – it has little clinical value; and the evidence is clear that the vast majority of people are unlikely to be infectious after 10 days.

Negative clearance tests are not an effective way to determine if a person is contagious, as very sensitive tests can pick up on dead virus particles weeks after a person has stopped being contagious. Clearance testing also strains the healthcare infrastructure. **ACPHD does not provide clearance letters for people to return to work and notes from doctors or medical providers are also not advised.**

Thank you for your cooperation and the important role that you play in keeping our communities safe.