

COVID-19

Frequently Asked Questions for Workplaces



This document was updated April 11, 2022. Please [visit our website](#) for the most up-to-date guidance.

For questions, contact the [Washtenaw County Health Department](#) at health@washtenaw.org or 734-544-6700.

This guidance contains recommendations intended for the general public, and is based on the best available science, data, and information at the time. Please contact your regulatory agency for questions about what is currently mandated for your industry. Note that [healthcare facilities](#), [schools](#), [child care facilities](#), long-term care/senior living facilities, congregate care facilities, and others may follow different guidance.

CDC COVID-19 Community Level:

The CDC published [COVID-19 Community Levels](#) as a tool to help determine prevention steps to take based on the latest data. Levels can be low, medium, or high, and are established by looking at hospital beds being used, COVID-19 related hospital admissions, and the total number of new COVID-19 cases in an area. At “low” and “medium” levels, universal masking in indoor public settings is no longer broadly recommended according to the CDC. At all levels, people can wear a mask based on preference or increased risk for themselves or others. People with symptoms, a positive test, or exposure to someone with COVID-19 should wear a mask. If choosing to wear a mask, a multilayer, surgical, KN95, or N95 mask is recommended rather than a cloth mask.

Low	Medium	High
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccinesGet tested if you have symptoms	<ul style="list-style-type: none">If you are at high risk for severe illness, talk to your healthcare provider about whether you need to wear a mask and take other precautionsStay up to date with COVID-19 vaccinesGet tested if you have symptoms	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Wear a mask indoors in publicStay up to date with COVID-19 vaccinesGet tested if you have symptomsAdditional precautions may be needed for people at high risk for severe illness

COVID-19 positive employees

One of our employees tested positive for COVID-19. What should I do?

- Instruct the positive employee to [stay home and isolate](#)** for at least 5 days after symptoms began (or 5 days after being tested if no symptoms at all). The day the individual first showed symptoms of illness (or the test date if they do not have symptoms) is “Day 0.” Count 5 days forward for the isolation period. The employee can return to work the next day (Day 6) if they have been fever-free for 24 hours and other symptoms have improved. They should wear a well-fitting mask for 5 more days (surgical, KN95, or N95 mask - not a cloth mask). *If the employee is not feeling better by day 6, they should continue to isolate at home until symptoms improve, or until 10 days have passed.* If the employee still has a fever, they should stay home until the fever is gone. If symptoms are not improving or are worsening, they should seek medical care. Even if the individual is fully vaccinated for COVID-19, they must isolate for at least 5 days if they test positive. You must protect the confidentiality of your employee. Legally, you cannot tell other staff or third parties the employee’s name or health information.

Additional recommendations to further reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19:

- If possible, the positive employee should take a rapid antigen test (not a PCR test) on day 5 of isolation. If negative, they can end isolation on day 6 if they wear a well-fitted, high-quality mask (not cloth) around others through day 10. If the rapid antigen test is still positive on day 5, they are still infectious and should continue to isolate through day 10.

- Those ending isolation on day 6 should be more cautious through day 10. Limit being around others as much as possible. Avoid contact with vulnerable individuals at high risk of severe outcomes (such as immunocompromised & elderly) until after day 10.
 - If the positive employee is often around vulnerable people (e.g., immunocompromised or elderly people), consider isolating for a full 10 days. If they stop isolation before 10 days, take a rapid antigen test (not a PCR test). If positive, continue isolating for the full 10 days.
2. **Determine when the COVID-19 positive person was at the facility while contagious.** If the person has symptoms, the contagious period starts 2 days before symptoms first began and goes until the person begins isolating at home away from others. If the person does not have any symptoms, the contagious period starts 2 days before the COVID-19 test was taken and goes until the person begins isolating at home. Determine the dates that others were at risk of exposure (i.e., dates the positive person was on site while contagious).
 3. **Determine who was a “close contact” of the positive person while they were contagious.** A “close contact” is someone who was within 6 feet of a person with COVID-19 during their contagious period for a total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period, either with or without wearing a mask. Brief individual interactions within 6 feet of the COVID-19 positive person should be added up for a total number of minutes of exposure that occurred during a 24-hour period (i.e., three separate 5-minute exposures within a 24-hour period would total 15 minutes). Review schedules to see who was at the facility on the dates of potential exposure. Talk to the positive employee and review surveillance video, if available, to determine who met close contact criteria.
 4. **Notify close contacts that they were exposed.** Protect the privacy of the positive person (i.e., notify people they were exposed and provide the last date of exposure, but do not disclose name or identifying details).

If the exposed person (or “close contact”) was a **personal or household contact** (household member, sleep over, carpool, changing diapers, or direct exposure to respiratory secretions like kissing, sharing drinks, sharing smoking products, etc.) of the COVID-19 positive person they should:

- Monitor for symptoms for 10 days.
- Test at least one time if possible, 3-7 days after exposure (if symptoms develop, definitely test).
- Wear a well-fitting mask for 10 days (surgical, KN95 or N95 mask - not a cloth mask) from the date of last exposure. If unable or unwilling to mask, quarantine at home for 10 days.
- Avoid unmasked activities or activities with higher risk of exposing vulnerable individuals for 10 days from the date of last exposure.
- If symptoms develop, isolate at home, avoid others and get tested (PCR or rapid antigen). If positive, follow isolation guidance. If negative, stay home until symptoms resolve. If symptoms worsen or change, follow up with a medical provider and consider getting another test.

If the person was exposed to someone who is **not a personal or household contact** (exposed in a community, social, or work setting):

- Monitor for symptoms for 10 days.
- Test if symptoms develop.
- Consider wearing a well-fitting, high-quality mask for 10 days (surgical, KN95 or N95 mask – not a cloth mask) from the date of last exposure to protect others. At a minimum, wear a mask in settings with higher risk of exposing vulnerable individuals.
- Avoid unmasked activities, or activities with higher risk of exposing vulnerable individuals for 10 days from the date of last exposure.
- If symptoms develop, isolate at home, avoid others, and get tested (PCR or rapid antigen). If positive, follow isolation guidance. If negative, stay home until symptoms resolve. If symptoms worsen or change, follow up with a medical provider and consider getting another test.

5. **Notify other potentially impacted people.** Inform other employees and those who may have had casual or brief contact with the COVID-19 positive individual that there was a positive case at your facility, while protecting the privacy of the positive person (e.g. others working in or visiting the facility who did not appear to have close contact for 15 minutes or more, but may have briefly interacted in passing or shared spaces such as bathroom, hallway, breakroom, entrance/exit, etc.).

Let employees know that any close contacts who potentially had a higher risk exposure have been identified and will be notified directly. If they are not notified directly of an exposure, they are considered lower risk – similar to any time a person goes out in any public setting when there is a high level of community transmission. These lower risk individuals should monitor for symptoms and seek testing if they develop symptoms in the 10 days following potential exposure.

6. **Clean, disinfect, and ventilate the facility.** If less than 24 hours have passed since the sick/diagnosed person has been on site, open doors and windows and use fans to increase air circulation and clean and disinfect the area, focusing on frequently touched surfaces in offices, bathrooms, common areas, and shared electronic equipment (tablets, touch screens, keyboards, remote controls, etc.). If more than 24 hours have passed, thorough cleaning is enough. If more than 3 days have passed since the COVID-19 positive person was last on site, no additional cleaning or disinfecting is needed.

Returning to work

If someone tests positive for COVID-19, when can they go back to work?

Isolation is used to keep someone who is infected with COVID-19 separated from others while they are contagious to prevent the spread of disease. Individuals in isolation must stay home, separate themselves from others (stay in specific room/area and use a separate bathroom if available), monitor their health, and follow [directions from their local health department](#). They should not enter or return to the workplace until they have met the return-to-work criteria outlined below.

Individuals who tested positive for COVID-19, or experienced symptoms and know/believe they have COVID-19, can safely return to work if they meet ALL of the following criteria:

- At least 5 days have passed since symptoms first appeared, **and**
- At least 24 hours with no fever without the use of fever-reducing medications, **and**
- Other symptoms have improved. (Note: Loss of taste and smell may continue for weeks or months after recovery. This does not delay the end of isolation/ability to safely return to work as long as other symptoms have improved.)

If the employee did not have any symptoms at all, at any point in their illness, they can return to work 5 days after the date they were tested.

If the employee is fully vaccinated for COVID-19, they should still complete a minimum 5-day isolation if they test positive for COVID-19.

5-day isolation timeline & return to work date calculation:

- Day 0 = date symptoms first started (or date test was taken if no symptoms at all)
- Day 1 = the day after symptoms first started (or the day after test was taken if no symptoms)
- Day 5 = must isolate at home away from others through the end of day 5
- Day 6 = first date they are *potentially eligible* to end isolation and return to work (if symptoms improved & wear mask)
- Days 6-10 = wear well-fitting mask to work (surgical, KN95, or N95 - not a cloth mask), avoid contact with vulnerable or high-risk individuals

Note that some people may continue to be infectious beyond 5 days. These isolation guidelines apply to mild/typical cases of COVID-19; they do not necessarily apply to people with underlying health conditions, severe COVID-19 illness, or weakened immune systems (immunocompromised). The isolation timeframe may be extended for individuals who are slower to recover, hospitalized, severely ill, or severely immunocompromised individuals. The positive employee must follow the guidance provided by the local health department or hospital. If the positive employee is still feeling significantly sick on day 6, they should not return to work until their symptoms improve significantly, until at least 10 days pass since symptoms first began, and/or they receive a negative rapid antigen test.

If someone is exposed to a COVID-19 positive individual, do they have to stay home and quarantine?

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) released [updated guidance](#) for individuals exposed to someone with COVID-19. Under this new guidance, at-home quarantine for exposed individuals is not required in most situations, even if the exposed individual is unvaccinated. Exposed individuals can continue to come to work as long as they do not have any symptoms. If the exposure is a personal or household contact (as described below) the employee should wear a well-fitting mask around others for 10 days from date of last exposure. If the exposure is to a personal/household contact (as described below) and the exposed employee is unable or unwilling to mask, they should quarantine at home for 10 days following exposure.

While no longer required, employers *may* institute more conservative workplace policies for returning to work after an exposure. It is at the employer's discretion to require quarantine, testing or other reasonable measures following an exposure to ensure the health and safety of other employees and clients/customers.

If the exposed person (or "close contact") was a **personal or household contact** (household member, sleep over, carpool, changing diapers, or direct exposure to respiratory secretions like kissing, sharing drinks, sharing smoking products, etc.) of the COVID-19 positive person they should:

- Monitor for symptoms for 10 days.
- Test at least one time if possible, 3-7 days after exposure (if symptoms develop, definitely test).
- Wear a well-fitting mask for 10 days (surgical, KN95 or N95 mask - not a cloth mask) from the date of last exposure. If unable or unwilling to mask, quarantine at home for 10 days.
- Avoid unmasked activities or activities with higher risk of exposing vulnerable individuals for 10 days from the date of last exposure.
- If symptoms develop, isolate at home, avoid others and get tested (PCR or rapid antigen). If positive, follow isolation guidance. If negative, stay home until symptoms resolve. If symptoms worsen or change, follow up with a medical provider and consider getting another test.

If the person was exposed to someone who is **not a personal or household contact** (exposed in a community, social, or work setting):

- Monitor for symptoms for 10 days.
- Test if symptoms develop.
- Consider wearing a well-fitting, high-quality mask for 10 days (surgical, KN95 or N95 mask - not a cloth mask) from the date of last exposure to protect others. At a minimum, wear a mask in settings with higher risk of exposing vulnerable individuals.
- Avoid unmasked activities, or activities with higher risk of exposing vulnerable individuals for 10 days from the date of last exposure.
- If symptoms develop, isolate at home, avoid others, and get tested (PCR or rapid antigen). If positive, follow isolation guidance. If negative, stay home until symptoms resolve. If symptoms worsen or change, follow up with a medical provider and consider getting another test.

If an employee has COVID-19 symptoms but does not get tested, when can they go back to work?

We encourage anyone with [symptoms](#) to get tested. Employees who have COVID-19 symptoms but who are not tested can return to work if they meet ALL the following:

- At least 5 days have passed since symptoms started, **and**
- At least 24 hours fever-free without the use of fever reducing medications, **and**
- Other symptoms have improved.

If an employee has COVID-19 symptoms but tests negative, when can they go back to work?

Individuals who have COVID-19 symptoms and who are tested can return to work if they meet ALL the following:

- Mild symptoms improve in a short period of time, **and**
- The person tests negative for COVID-19, **and**
- The person is not a close contact of a COVID-19 positive individual.

If they meet the above criteria, they do not need to continue to stay at home for the 5 full days after symptoms began. However, it is a good policy for anyone to be fever-free without the use of medications for 24 hours before returning to work. Also, vomiting or diarrhea should be gone for 24 hours before returning to work.

If symptoms continue after a negative test, they should see a health care provider to rule out other illnesses.

An employee was exposed and developed symptoms and/or tested positive. When can they return?

If an employee develops symptoms within 10 days after exposure, they should follow the return-to-work guidelines for a positive person outlined above. They should seek testing and isolate for at least 5 days after symptoms start and be fever-free for at least 24 hours with other symptoms improved, before returning on day 6 wearing a well-fitted high-quality mask through the end of day 10. If they did not have symptoms and test positive, they should isolate for 5 days after the test was taken, and they can return to work on day 6.

An employee who did not have any symptoms tested positive for COVID-19. Then they developed symptoms a couple days later. When can they go back to work?

They should isolate for 5 days *after symptoms start*, and then be at least 24 hours fever-free, with other symptoms improved, before returning on day 6.

An employee's household member has been diagnosed with COVID-19. What should I do?

If the employee has a household member who has been diagnosed with COVID-19, the employee should:

- Avoid contact with the COVID-19 positive household member as much as possible. The positive household member should isolate away from others in their own room (and bathroom, if possible). The employee should limit contact with the positive person and maintain at least 6-foot distance when in the same room/area. Everyone should wear well-fitted high-quality masks (surgical, N95 or KN95 - not cloth) when in shared spaces and should avoid engaging in high-risk activities together at the same time (such as eating together, exercising, or other activities where there is increased respiratory droplet transmission or heavy breathing/exertion, and/or where masks cannot be worn consistently by both parties).
- Monitor for symptoms for 10 days after their last exposure to the positive person.
- Test at least one time if possible 3-7 days after exposure (if symptoms develop, definitely test).
- Wear a well-fitting mask for 10 days from the date of last exposure to protect others. If unable or unwilling to mask, quarantine at home for 10 days.
- Avoid unmasked activities or activities with higher risk of exposing vulnerable individuals for 10 days from the date of last exposure.
- If symptoms develop, avoid others and get tested (PCR or rapid antigen). If positive, follow isolation guidance. If negative, stay home until symptoms resolve. If symptoms worsen or change, follow up with a medical provider and consider getting another test.

An employee tested positive for COVID-19 and then their spouse/child tested positive a couple days later. Does this delay the employee's return to work?

If the employee has tested positive for COVID-19, and their spouse, child, or other household member then tests positive in the days or week following, the employee will still follow their original isolation timeframe and guidance. The employee should isolate for 5 days after their own symptoms start (or 5 days after the test date if they do not have symptoms), and then be at least 24 hours fever-free, with other symptoms improved, before returning on day 6.

The positive test of a household member does not impact the employee's return to work date or timeline. The recently recovered employee would not be re-infected by a household member infected with the same variant so soon after recovering and if the employee has recovered and is no longer contagious, they are not at risk of 'carrying' the virus to the workplace or transmitting to others.

An employee showed up to work ill or became ill at work. What should I do?

If an employee comes to work sick or becomes ill while at work, direct them to go home immediately. If they are having trouble breathing or cannot keep fluids down, have them contact their healthcare provider right away.

Encourage the employee to be tested for COVID-19. Until results are available, the individual should isolate at home. Follow the return-to-work guidelines for a positive person. They should isolate for 5 days after symptoms start, and then be at least 24 hours fever-free, with other symptoms improved, before returning on day 6.

Clean and disinfect the work environment of the employee, along with frequently touched surfaces like restroom doors, doorknobs/push bars, elevator buttons, etc. Use [EPA-approved disinfectants](#) according to instructions.

Close contact

What does “close contact” mean?

A “close contact” is someone who:

- Was within 6 feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period (either with or without wearing masks).
- Provided care at home to someone who is sick with COVID-19.
- Had direct physical contact with an infected person (hugged or kissed them).
- Shared eating or drinking utensils with an infected person.

The contagious period starts 2 days before symptoms begin (or 2 days before the infected person was tested if they don't have symptoms) until the time the infected person is isolated. Individual exposures over a 24-hour period should be added up to determine total exposure time (i.e., three 5-minute exposures for a total of 15 minutes).

What if someone had contact with a close contact?

A contact of a ‘close contact’ (a person exposed to COVID-19 positive individual while infectious) has had no direct contact with COVID-19 and is not considered exposed or at risk. A ‘contact of a contact’ does not need to be notified, contacted, or concerned because they were not directly exposed to COVID-19.

If the close contact later develops symptoms or tests positive, and the person had contact with them within 2 days of symptom development/positive test, this could change their status from a ‘contact of a contact’ to a close contact of a confirmed COVID-19 case. But this is only if the individual they had direct contact with later develops COVID-19.

Screening

What screening questions should I ask my employees?

Daily health screenings are not required for non-healthcare settings. Businesses can choose to screen employees or ask employees to “self-monitor” for symptoms. Each day/shift, consider asking employees about exposure to anyone suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19, and about any new or unusual [symptoms](#) such as fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, or diarrhea.

Do I have to take the temperature of all my employees?

Taking employee temperatures is not required for non-healthcare settings. Employees can be encouraged to monitor their temperature at home or report if they feel feverish. Any temperature 100.4°F or above is considered a fever. Not everyone who is infected with COVID-19 develops a fever.

Traveling

What is the guidance for workers who have traveled?

Travel guidance changes frequently. Please see the current [CDC recommendations for travel](#). Note that workplaces and schools may set their own travel policies.

Masks

Should employees or customers wear masks?

For the general public, masks are not required to be worn in most settings. Note that [healthcare facilities](#), long term or congregate care facilities, and other settings may have different mask requirements.

The CDC has published [COVID-19 Community Levels](#) as a new tool to help individuals and communities decide what prevention steps to take based on the latest data. Levels can be low, medium, or high and are determined by looking at hospital beds being used, COVID-19 related hospital admissions, and the total number of new COVID-19 cases in an area.

Masks are recommended to be worn in areas with “high” COVID-19 community levels, and in certain circumstances or for high-risk individuals may be appropriate and recommended to be worn indoors in areas with medium levels of community transmission. Take precautions to protect yourself and others based on the COVID-19 Community Level in your area.

At all levels, people can wear a mask based on preference or increased risk for themselves or others. People with symptoms, a positive test, or exposure to someone with COVID-19 should wear a mask. If choosing to wear a mask, a multilayer, surgical, KN95, or N95 mask is recommended rather than a cloth mask.

How should I wear a mask?

Masks must be [worn correctly](#) to be effective. Masks should cover nose and mouth and fit snugly against the sides of face and under chin. Masks should be secured with ties or ear loops. Handle masks only by ear loops or ties. Don't put the mask around your neck, chin, or up on your forehead. Don't touch the mask, and if you do, wash or sanitize hands. Masks with valves or vents are not recommended. Based on available research, face shields alone are not considered effective face coverings.

Hand hygiene & respiratory etiquette

Is hand sanitizer equal to washing your hands?

Washing hands with warm running water and soap is preferred whenever available. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers don't kill ALL types of germs, including norovirus, some parasites, hepatitis A, and Clostridium difficile. Hand sanitizers also may not remove harmful chemicals like pesticides and heavy metals like lead. Handwashing reduces the amounts of all types of germs, pesticides, and metals on hands.

Fortunately, hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol can kill the virus that causes COVID-19. Hand sanitizer should be used when running water is not available or practical. For example, hand sanitizer could be used after checking out at a grocery store cash register or moving between workstations in a factory.

What's the correct way to wash your hands?

When washing your hands, wet hands with clean running water and apply soap. Lather hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Scrub all surfaces of hands, including the palms, backs, fingers, between fingers, and under nails. Keep scrubbing for 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the “Happy Birthday” song twice. Rinse hands under clean, running water. Dry hands using a clean towel or air dry them.

Handwashing materials and posters are [available online](#).

What's the correct way to use hand sanitizer?

Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Supervise young children when they use hand sanitizer. Apply enough product on hands to cover all surfaces. Rub hands together until hands feel dry. This should take around 20 seconds. Do not rinse or wipe off the hand sanitizer before it's dry.

Cleaning & disinfection

How often do we need to clean and disinfect surfaces?

In most situations, the risk of infection from touching a surface is low. The most reliable way to prevent infection from surfaces is to regularly wash hands or use hand sanitizer. When no sick individuals are known to have been in a space, cleaning once a day is usually enough to maintain a healthy facility. More frequent cleaning may be needed for high-traffic areas, and for areas occupied by young children or others who may not consistently wash hands or cover coughs and sneezes.

What should I use to clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces?

Cleaning with soap and water or a cleaning agent reduces germs, dirt, and impurities on surfaces. Disinfecting kills germs on surfaces. If disinfection is necessary, use a product that is [EPA-approved](#) for use against COVID-19. Maintain [Safety Data Sheets](#) (formerly Material Safety Data Sheets or MSDS) for any product used for cleaning or disinfecting and follow manufacturer instructions. Provide appropriate training to employees on safe handling and use of the product, potential health effects of product use, and personal protective equipment required.

Wear reusable or disposable gloves for cleaning and disinfection of high touch surfaces like tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, sinks, etc. Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water after removing gloves. Consider using wipeable covers for electronics. If manufacturer guidance is not available, use alcohol-based wipes or spray containing at least 70% alcohol to disinfect electronic devices. Spray a cloth or paper towel and wipe the device rather than spraying anything directly on electronics. Dry surfaces thoroughly.

Can I use bleach to disinfect surfaces?

A diluted bleach water solution is effective against COVID-19. Check the label to see if the bleach is intended for disinfection. Some bleaches, like those for use on colored clothing, may not be suitable for disinfection. Follow manufacturer instructions for application and ventilation. Mix 1/3 cup bleach per gallon of water OR 4 teaspoons bleach per quart of water. Wipe the solution on the surface to be disinfected. Leave solution on the surface for at least 1 minute. Make fresh bleach solution every 24 hours. **Never mix bleach with ammonia or any other cleaner.**

How should I clean and disinfect after someone with COVID-19 has been in my facility?

Follow this [CDC guidance](#) if someone who is sick or diagnosed with COVID-19 has been in the facility:

- Open outside doors and windows and use ventilating fans to increase air circulation in the area.
- If less than 24 hours have passed since the person who is sick or diagnosed with COVID-19 has been in the space, clean and disinfect the space.
- If more than 24 hours have passed since the person who is sick or diagnosed with COVID-19 has been in the space, cleaning is enough. You may choose to also disinfect depending on certain conditions or everyday practices required by your facility.
- If more than 3 days have passed since the person who is sick or diagnosed with COVID-19 has been in the space, no additional cleaning beyond regular cleaning practices is needed.

When cleaning and disinfecting, focus on frequently touched surfaces in offices, bathrooms, common areas, and shared electronic equipment used by the person who is sick (tablets, touch screens, keyboards, remote controls, etc.). Do not vacuum a room or space that has people in it. Wait until the room or space is empty to vacuum, such as at night for common spaces, or during the day for private rooms.

COVID-19 testing

Where can I get tested?

Check with your health care provider or see www.washtenaw.org/COVID19test for testing locations.

What types of tests are available for COVID-19?

A viral test looks for **current** infection. These are usually nasal swabs or saliva tests. A PCR test is the most accurate test and is most often recommended. PCR test results can take a couple days. A rapid antigen test is less accurate than a PCR test, especially if people do not have symptoms, but results are available in minutes.

An antibody test or serology (blood) test looks for **past** infection. There are currently many unknowns about COVID-19 antibody testing. It is not clear how accurate these tests are, or if they tell us anything about future immunity to COVID-19.

Should I get a COVID-19 test?

If you have any symptoms, get a **viral** test to check for current infection.

If you have been exposed to someone infected with COVID-19, get a **viral** test, but wait 5 days after the exposure.

Washtenaw County Health Department **does not currently recommend antibody testing**. If you do get an antibody test, we strongly recommend getting both an antibody test and a viral test. Consult your healthcare provider.

When should I test after a possible exposure?

Testing right after exposure is not recommended, as the virus can take several days to build up enough in the body to develop symptoms or show positive on a test. Individuals should wait at least **5 days** after exposure before being tested. Testing too soon will most likely result in a false negative test, and a false sense of security. However, if an individual has symptoms after an exposure, they should be tested.

What should I do while waiting for viral COVID-19 test results?

If you have symptoms or were exposed to someone who tested positive for COVID-19:

- Stay at home except to get medical care.
- Stay away from other people in your home.
 - Use a separate bedroom and bathroom if possible.
 - Wear a mask if you go into shared spaces.
 - Clean frequently touched surfaces and objects.
- Call ahead before visiting a doctor. Review [what to do if you're sick](#) for more information on managing your symptoms and when to get medical care.
- Make a list of who you had contact with 2 days before your symptoms began or since you were exposed.

If you have no symptoms and no known contact with someone who tested positive:

- Still try to stay away from others as much as possible.
- Keep track of anyone you come in close contact with after your test, as well as 2 days before your test.

What do the different COVID-19 test results mean?

Positive viral (PCR/antigen) test: The individual is considered to have an active COVID-19 infection. They should isolate for 5 days after symptoms start (or 5 days since the date of the test if no symptoms), and then be at least 24 hours fever-free, with other symptoms improved, before returning on day 6. Health Department staff may be in touch with the individual.

Negative viral (PCR/antigen) test: No action needed. Just remember this is a point in time for the test. The individual could have been recently exposed and tested negative or could be exposed after testing.

Positive antibody (blood/serology) test: The individual likely had a past infection. The individual can continue to work with a positive antibody test. People can be infected with COVID-19 multiple times, so do not assume a positive antibody test means a person won't get infected or sick in the future. Each case of infection is different, and a person could be asymptomatic one time and severely ill the second time infected.

Negative antibody (blood/serology) test: No action needed.

Policies

What else can I do to help keep staff and customers safe?

- Encourage employees to be vaccinated for COVID-19 and to receive appropriate boosters. Find a vaccine here: www.washtenaw.org/covid19vaccine
- Encourage sick employees to stay home, and to be tested for COVID-19.
- Encourage masking when someone has tested positive or been exposed, and support employees who choose to wear a mask. Encourage everyone to wear a mask when [COVID-19 Community Levels](#) are high.
- Maintain improved ventilation throughout indoor spaces when possible.

Although specific COVID-19 prevention strategies are no longer required for most settings, the Washtenaw County Health Department strongly encourages each workplace to evaluate their operations, and to follow [CDC](#) and [Occupational Safety & Health Administration \(OSHA\)](#) recommendations to prevent disease spread and protect worker health and safety.

For questions, contact the [Washtenaw County Health Department](#) at health@washtenaw.org or 734-544-6700.