

GUIDANCE FOR EMPLOYERS

This document provides guidance for essential and non-essential workplaces (other than health care settings) when responding to notification that one or more employees test positive or are close contacts to someone with COVID-19. Separate guidance for healthcare workers testing positive for COVID-19 is available.

Employee Health Screening and When to Exclude Employees

In addition to general employer/employee health policies, businesses should exclude ill employees who meet any of the following criteria:

- 1) Employee is ill with fever (measured at 100° F or feels feverish) **OR** has any of the following new onset of symptoms: cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, runny nose, congestion, sore throat, chills, muscle aches, fatigue, headache, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, or new loss of taste or smell.
- 2) Employee is confirmed to have COVID-19 through diagnostic testing. Employers should work with the case to [determine close contacts in the workplace](#), and inform coworkers of their possible exposure to COVID-19 but maintain confidentiality. The NDDoH no longer notifies employers of cases within the workplace.
 - a. Employees with confirmed COVID-19 should be excluded until 5 days have passed, if the person is asymptomatic, or if symptoms are improving and the individual has been fever free without medications for 24 hours at day 5. This isolation period should be followed by five days of wearing a well-fitting mask while around others.
- 3) [Potentially exposed coworkers](#) or **close contacts**, defined as someone within 6 feet for 15 cumulative minutes or more in a 24-hour period while the case is deemed to be infectious (48 hours prior to their onset of symptoms; for asymptomatic cases, 48 hours prior to the date they were tested).
 - a. If the close contact has received their booster shot, has had a prior infection in the last 90 days, or are within six months of their primary mRNA series or two months of J & J does, or if both the infected person and the close contact were [consistently and correctly wearing appropriate masks](#) at all times, then they do not need to quarantine following an exposure, but should wear a mask for 10 days after the exposure. For all those exposed, best practice would also include a test for SARS-CoV-2 at day five after exposure. If symptoms occur, individuals should immediately quarantine until a negative test confirms symptoms are not attributable to COVID-19.

- b. If the close contact has not been vaccinated or is more than 6 months out from their second mRNA dose, or more than 2 months after the J & J dose, and not yet boosted, the CDC recommends quarantine for five days followed by strict mask use for an additional five days. If a five day quarantine is not feasible, it is imperative than an exposed person wear a well-fitting mask at all times when around others for 10 days after exposure.

Work Practices to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19

The NDDoH developed a [Workplace Assessment for COVID-19](#) (WAC) and the following guidance to help business owners, employers, non-profits, and managers make decisions that affect their individual operation. Employers are encouraged to use this self-assessment to guide potential best practices for preventing and responding to COVID-19 in the business setting. The WAC is not required to be reviewed or approved by the NDDoH or local public health unit (LPHU). Recognizing that conditions and circumstances change daily, employers may reach out to the NDDoH or LPHU if there are additional questions.

1. COVID-19 case(s) identified in your community, but not in your workplace

Non-essential and essential businesses may continue operations based on their county's designated risk level per the ND Smart Restart Plan. Businesses and employers should follow [CDC guidance](#) regarding preparing for COVID-19 AND complete the [Workplace Assessment for COVID-19](#). [Guidance](#) includes employee screening methods, monitoring employee sick leave, asking sick employees to stay home, social distancing, ensuring handwashing, environmental cleaning, communicating with customers, etc. When possible, employees should telework.

2. Employee tests positive / COVID-19 case in your workplace

If an employee/volunteer tests positive for COVID-19, the NDDoH will instruct the case to notify his/her place of work and provide [guidance to help the case identify close contacts](#). Employers should notify [workplace close contacts](#) while maintaining confidentiality.

Employees with confirmed COVID-19 should be **excluded** until

5 days have passed, if the person is asymptomatic, or if symptoms are improving and the individual has been fever free without medications for 24 hours at day 5. This isolation period should be followed by five days of wearing a well-fitting mask while around others.



An employee tested positive OR workplace close contacts report symptoms. Next steps:

- 1) Follow employee exclusion criteria.
- 2) Rapidly identify close contacts potentially exposed in the workplace and follow recommended [five day quarantine](#) followed by strict mask use for an additional five days unless previously cited quarantine exemptions apply.
- 3) Close off areas used by the person who is sick. CDC recommends waiting at least 24 hours before conducting extensive [environmental cleaning](#) in the area. If 24 hours is not feasible, wait as long as possible.



COVID-19 close contact(s) in your workplace

A close contact is defined as a household contact or an individual who was within 6 feet of the case for 15 cumulative minutes or longer. The timeframe for exposure to an infected individual includes the period of time **48 hours before** the individual became symptomatic (or tested positive if asymptomatic) and while the individual was contagious (at least 2-3 days after onset of symptoms or positive test if asymptomatic).

If a case worked while he/she was contagious, employers should work with the case to [determine close contacts in the workplace](#). Employers should notify those identified as close contacts to a confirmed case of COVID-19 while maintaining confidentiality. Close contacts are recommended to quarantine for 5 days followed by strict mask use for an additional five day from their last exposure to a case, unless previously cited quarantine exemptions apply.

Essential Workforce Exceptions and Recommendations for COVID-19

This guidance is for people who are essential workers (**excluding healthcare providers**) as defined by the [United States Department of Homeland Security](#).

The North Dakota Department of Health strongly recommends that all close contacts of individuals infected with COVID-19 should quarantine for 5 days with 5 days of strict mask use following unless previously cited quarantine exemptions apply. The risk is high that a close contact of someone with COVID-19 will go on to develop COVID-19.

CDC published guidance for [COVID-19 Critical Infrastructure Sector Response Planning](#). This guidance offers exceptions for critical infrastructure workers identified as close contacts, suggesting essential workers may attend work if deemed necessary provided the employer takes special precautions including adherence to the [Workplace Assessment for COVID-19](#).

- Employees/volunteers identified as close contacts to a person with COVID-19 and who are considered [critical infrastructure workers](#) may return to work as long as they remain **asymptomatic** and the following safety practices are implemented by the employee and the employer:
 1. Notify: Employees should notify a supervisor and/or occupational health representative of their contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19.
 2. [Pre-Screen: Employers](#) should measure the employee's temperature and assess symptoms prior to their starting work. Ideally, temperature checks should happen before the individual enters the facility.
 3. Regular Monitoring: As long as the employee doesn't have a fever or symptoms, they should self-monitor under the supervision of their employer's occupational health program.
 4. [Wear a Mask: The](#) employee should wear a well fitted face mask at all times while in the workplace for 10 days after their last exposure. Employers can issue face masks or can approve employees' supplied cloth face coverings in the event of shortages.
 5. Social Distance: The employee should maintain 6 feet and practice social distancing as work duties permit in the workplace.
 6. Disinfect and Clean Workspaces: Extensive [environmental cleaning](#) of all areas such as offices, bathrooms, common areas, shared electronic equipment routinely.

COVID-19 Testing Recommendations at the Workplace

Symptomatic exposed workers should isolate and contact their healthcare provider for testing.

Asymptomatic coworkers identified by the case as close contacts are also recommended to be tested. Testing ideally should occur 5 days after their last exposure to a case. If an outbreak is occurring in the facility, testing should occur as soon as possible. If positive, an employee is recommended to stay home for 5 days from their test date followed by 5 days of strict mask use.

Additional [testing strategies and recommendations are available for high density critical infrastructure workplaces](#) (i.e., food processing, manufacturing plants).

NDDoH Fact Sheets and Vaccination Information

[You Have COVID-19, Now What?](#)

[You Are a Close Contact to a COVID-19 Case, Now What?](#)

[What's the Difference Between Physical Distancing, Quarantine and Isolation?](#)

[Quarantine & Isolation Calculator](#)

[COVID-19 Vaccine Information | Department of Health \(nd.gov\)](#)

DoH COVID-19 Public Health Hotline: 1-866-207-2880, Monday – Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The NDDoH Workplace Subject Matter Expert team is available to provide guidance and can be contacted at dohcovidbusiness@nd.gov or 701-328-2378.