



SMART RESTART, SMART BUSINESS

EMPLOYER FAQ - OUTBREAKS

Coronavirus (COVID-19)



GENERAL QUESTIONS ABOUT COVID-19 AND THE WORKPLACE

What should an employer do to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in their facility?

Employers should:

- Allow employees to work remotely, communicate virtually, and limit in-person meetings and gatherings, to the maximum extent possible
- Stagger work schedules and rearrange workspaces to allow physical distancing to be maintained
- Provide employees with proper PPE (gloves, masks, etc. as defined by job duties and risk of exposure), handwashing supplies, and hand sanitizer
- Post signs in languages commonly spoken by employees reminding them to remain 6 feet apart, wear a cloth face covering, frequently wash their hands, and cover their coughs and sneezes
- Review and revise sick leave policies to encourage and support employees who are ill, who have tested positive, or who have been exposed, to stay home
- Examine ventilation and air flow within workspaces, and increase air flow from outdoors, whenever possible
- Have clear policies written for hygiene, cleaning, and protective measures
- Provide training, information, and communication in languages commonly spoken by employees about:
 - employee illness and leave policies
 - symptoms of COVID-19
 - what to do if they were exposed
 - where they can go to get tested
 - what to do if they test positive
 - the importance of physical distancing and wearing a cloth face covering
 - the importance of frequent hand washing or sanitizing
 - the importance of heightened cleaning and sanitizing protocols
 - when to wear PPE and the proper way to put on, wear, and remove
- Ensure those who are responsible for cleaning and sanitizing the workplace have been properly trained, have access to appropriate PPE, and consider providing hazard pay



What symptoms of COVID-19 should I have my employees self-monitor for prior to coming to work?

- Fever
- Chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea

This list is not all-inclusive. For more information about COVID-19 symptoms, please reference [CDC guidelines](#).

If someone is showing any of the signs below, seek emergency medical care immediately:

- Trouble breathing
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- New confusion
- Inability to wake or stay awake
- Bluish lips or face

Will my business be contacted if one of my employees tests positive?

Local Public Health Departments will contact businesses if they determine an employee with COVID-19 was at a worksite while contagious. You will be asked for the names, date of birth, addresses, or phone numbers for employees who had close contact with the employee who tested positive. You are required to comply with these requests under statute 252.03(1). You will also be asked to notify employees who were exposed, however do not name or otherwise identify the employee who tested positive.

In accordance with HIPAA guidelines, it is important not to share any more information than is minimally necessary about the person who tested positive. You are able to share general information about the exposure and the guidance provided by the health department to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Only employees whose exposure has been determined to be close contact need to be notified.

What is the definition of close contact?

Close contact is defined as being within 6 feet of an infected person for 15 minutes or more in a single day starting from 48 hours before illness onset.



What is the definition of an outbreak in a non-healthcare facility?

An outbreak is defined as two more cases of COVID-19 within a non-healthcare facility.

When and how should I clean and disinfect my facility?

At this time it is strongly encouraged that all businesses clean and disinfect using [EPA-approved disinfectants](#) on a more frequent basis and it is recommended that all high-touch surfaces are cleaned every 2 hours, or after every user, when possible.

Identify staff who will be responsible for disinfecting. Avoid assigning it to workers who are high-risk, or who live with people who are at high risk of severe illness from COVID.

If you have identified that an employee has tested positive or exhibits symptoms while at work, the CDC has provided the following guidelines: [cleaning in a facility](#).

How will the Local Public Health Department help if we think someone is coming to work sick?

Allowing anyone to work when sick violates [CDC COVID-19 guidance](#). Management should take steps to isolate any employee who appears ill and send them home as soon as possible.

Does the business with an outbreak need to notify the general public?

In cases where a large number of people working in an establishment test positive and close contacts are not easily traceable; the Local Public Health Department may need to notify the general public that an exposure at that business may have occurred.

I HAVE AN EMPLOYEE WHO TESTED POSITIVE FOR COVID-19

Do I need to contact the Local Public Health Department about this employee?

Although encouraged, you are not required to contact your Local Public Health Department for a single case. However, if you identify multiple employees who are ill, or have tested positive, and have worked closely together (closer than 6 feet apart for at least 15 minutes over the course of a day), contact your Local Health Department for guidance. You will need to follow [CDC guidelines](#) under the Prevent and Reduce Transmission Among Employees section which discusses what to do with employees experiencing symptoms as well as those who have tested positive.

When informing employees who were in close contact with a person testing positive that they may have been exposed while at work, you must protect the identity of the employee who tested positive and keep confidential which employee has contracted COVID-19 per HIPAA guidelines.

Do I need to shut down my facility if the employee was on-site while contagious?

In most cases, you do not need to shut down your facility. Use [CDC cleaning and disinfection recommendations](#) to clean and disinfect the areas where the infected employee worked over the last six days. Disinfection is not necessary if it has been at least seven days since the person with suspected/confirmed COVID-19 visited or used the facility.

Temporary closure may be necessary in some situations when there is evidence of significant transmission between employees. Temporary closure allows time for disinfection, contact tracing, and testing of employees.

What steps should I take after an employee of my non-healthcare facility tests positive for COVID-19?

Follow [CDC guidelines](#) for cleaning and disinfecting your facility. When possible, do not reopen until cleaning has been completed.

Consult with your Local Health Department to confirm an isolation period. Do not allow an employee who tests positive to come to work until all of the following are complete:

- At least 10 days have passed since symptom onset
- Employee has been free of fever for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications
- All other symptoms have improved
- If employee did not have symptoms, they should remain in isolation for at least 10 days after your test date
- View the following criteria on the DHS WI Website:

[Isolation release times for people with symptoms](#)

[Isolation release times for people without symptoms](#)

Do not allow other employees with close contact to an employee testing positive to come to work until they have completed at least 10 days of self-quarantine.

Provide employees who are prohibited to work with information about paid sick leave and other financial support your company offers, including federal paid leave options, unemployment insurance options, and other possible government assistance options.



Do I need to notify customers or clients?

If the employee with the positive test had close contact (within 6 feet for at least 15 minutes in a single day) with any customers or clients, those individuals should be notified that they may have been exposed, but do not reveal the employee's identity. The Local Public Health Department will work with you to do this. Notification is required under statute 252.03(1).

Does a business with one employee who tests positive need to notify the general public?

No.

How do I clean and disinfect my facility after an employee tested positive for COVID-19 and was at work while contagious?

If an employee tested positive for COVID-19 and worked while contagious, it is recommended to thoroughly clean and disinfect the space where they worked using [EPA-approved disinfectants](#) effective against COVID-19. According to the CDC, the following cleaning and disinfecting should be performed in your facility:

- Close off areas used by the person who is sick
- Companies do not necessarily need to close operations if they can close off affected areas
- Open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in the area
- Wait 24 hours before you clean or disinfect. If 24 hours is not feasible, wait as long as possible to minimize exposure
- Clean and disinfect all areas used by the infected person such as offices, bathrooms, common areas, shared electronic equipment like tablets, touch screens, keyboards, remote controls, and ATM machines
- Ensure workers who are responsible for cleaning have adequate PPE. Avoid assigning it to workers who are high-risk, or who live with people who are at high risk of severe illness from COVID.
- [Vacuum the space](#) if needed. Use vacuum equipped with a high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter, if available
- Do not vacuum a room or space that has people in it. Wait until the room or space is empty to vacuum, such as after hours, for common spaces, or during the day for private rooms
- Consider temporarily turning off room fans and the central HVAC system that services the room or space, so that particles that escape from vacuuming will not circulate throughout the facility

Once the area has been appropriately disinfected, it can be opened for use.

Workers who have not had close contact with the infected person can return to work immediately after disinfecting.

If more than 7 days have passed since the person who is sick visited or used the facility, additional cleaning and disinfection is not necessary.

Continue routine cleaning and disinfection. This includes everyday practices that businesses and communities normally use to maintain a healthy environment.

The MMAC provides a listing of [Decontamination Services](#) in the greater Milwaukee area.

When can an employee with a positive COVID-19 test return to work?

Employees with a positive test may return to work when they meet all of the criteria below:

- At least 10 days have passed since symptom onset
- They have been free of fever for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications
- All other symptoms have improved
- If the employee never developed symptoms, they may return to work 10 days after the date of their first COVID-19 test
- If employee did not have symptoms, they should remain in isolation for at least 10 days after your test date
- View the criteria below on the DHS WI Website:

[Isolation release times for people with symptoms](#)

[Isolation release times for people without symptoms](#)

The CDC recommends basing decisions about returning to work on symptom resolution. It is not recommended or required that employees have a negative test before returning to work.

Does an employee need a clearance letter from Public Health to return to work?

No, employees do not need a clearance letter before returning to work. Local Public Health Departments work with people who have a positive test to determine when they can return to work based on the criteria above and provide this information in the work exclusion letter.

What if the employee diagnosed with COVID-19 is asymptomatic? When can they come back to work?

Employees who are asymptomatic but had a positive test for COVID-19 should:

- Self-isolate and monitor their health for 10 days after first positive test

- If they never develop symptoms, they may return to work after 10 days from testing

If they develop symptoms during the 10 days, all the following must be met prior to returning to work:

- At least 10 days have passed since symptom onset
- Employee has been without a fever for at least 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing medications
- All other symptoms have improved: [Isolation release times for people without symptoms](#)

I HAVE AN EMPLOYEE WHO HAD CLOSE CONTACT WITH SOMEONE WHO TESTED POSITIVE FOR COVID-19

When can an employee who has come into close contact with an individual with COVID-19 return to work?

Close contact is defined as being within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes, in a single day, starting from 48 hours before illness onset. Employees who have been exposed to a person with COVID-19 may return to work after they meet the following criteria:

- They self-isolated for 14 days from their last contact with the person and have had no symptoms
- View this criteria on the DHS WI Website: [Quarantine release times](#)
- If they develop symptoms during the self-isolation period, employees must stay home and avoid others until all of the following have been met:
 - At least 10 days have passed since symptom onset
 - Employee has been without fever for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications
 - All other symptoms have improved

Employees do not need a negative test or a clearance letter before returning to work. Local Public Health Departments work with people who have been in contact with someone with COVID-19 to determine when they can return to work based on the criteria above and provide this information in the work exclusion letter.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

For food operators, review FDA's [What to Do If You Have COVID-19 Confirmed Positive or Exposed Workers in Your Food Production, Storage, or Distribution Operations](#)

CDC Factsheet on [Cleaning and Disinfecting in a Facility](#)

MMAC listing of [Decontamination Services](#)

City of Milwaukee Health Department's [Restaurant and Bar COVID-19 Safety Plan](#).

[WEDC Reopening Guidelines](#)

This document was created in collaboration with the following organizations: Medical College of Wisconsin, Milwaukee's Unified Emergency Operations Center (UEOC), Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS), Northshore Health Department, Oak Creek Health Department, Milwaukee Health Department, Cudahy Health Department, South Milwaukee Health Department, Greenfield Health Department and M7.*

**Milwaukee's Unified Emergency Operations Center--a collaboration among the 19 municipalities in Milwaukee County, public health leaders, health care providers and public safety officers--coordinates a unified multi-sector public health response to COVID-19, with an emphasis on addressing health disparities throughout the County.*