Health Advisory
August 13, 2020

COVID-19 Return to Work Guidelines for Fresno County

Per Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines, the Fresno County Department of Public Health recommends allowing people to return to work by using the symptom-based strategy rather than the testing-based strategy. Testing-based strategy is listed below for information in case needed for special cases. Employees should be able to come out of isolation and return to work without a negative test or a doctor’s note if they meet the symptom-based criteria below.

1. For symptomatic workers (suspected or confirmed COVID-19):
   - **Symptom-based strategy.** Can return to work if:
     - At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared and
     - At least 1 day (24 hours) have passed since last fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and
     - Other symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath, body aches, etc.) have improved
   - **Symptom-based strategy for severe to critical illness or who are severely immunocompromised.** Can return to work if:
     - At least 20 days have passed since symptoms first appeared and
     - At least 1 day (24 hours) have passed since last fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and
     - Other symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath, body aches, etc.) have improved
   - **Test-based strategy.*** Can return to work if:
     - Resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications, and
     - Improvement in symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath, body aches, etc.), and
     - Negative results from a WHO-recommended laboratory test for SARS-CoV-2 from at least two consecutive respiratory specimens collected ≥24 hours apart (total of two negative specimens).

*Not recommended and only used for special cases per discussion with a physician or local infectious disease specialist.

Categories of Health Alert Messages:

**Health Alert:** Conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention
**Health Advisory:** Provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action
**Health Update:** Provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action
**Health Information:** Provides general health information which is not considered to be of emergent nature
COVID-19 Return to Work Guidelines for Fresno County

2. For **asymptomatic workers** with confirmed COVID-19:

- **Time-based strategy.** Can return to work if:
  - 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. If they develop symptoms, then the symptom-based (and in some special cases test-based strategy in consultation with physician/infectious disease specialist) should be used.

- **Time-based strategy for severely immunocompromised.** Can return to work if:
  - 20 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. If they develop symptoms, then the symptom-based (and in some special cases test-based strategy in consultation with physician/infectious disease specialist) should be used.

- **Test-based strategy.** *Can return to work if:*
  - Negative results from a WHO-recommended laboratory test for SARS-CoV-2 from at least two consecutive respiratory specimens collected ≥24 hours apart (total of two negative specimens).

  *Not recommended and only used for special cases per discussion with a physician or local infectious disease specialist.

3. For **asymptomatic workers** who were **exposed to confirmed COVID-19 person**:

- **Critical infrastructure workers** (as defined by Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency):
  - Recommendation is still to send worker home to quarantine for 14 days. Employer can consider having employee work from home/remotely.
  - However, if work is unable to be done from home and there is shortage of staff at work, then critical infrastructure workers can continue to work. They MUST wear a mask at all times and adhere to distancing, hand hygiene and symptom/temperature screening guidelines.

- **NOT a critical infrastructure worker:**
  - Worker should be sent home to quarantine for 14 days from their last exposure.
  - Can consider working from home/remotely.

4. For COVID positive patients who are tested a second time and test positive again, the second and subsequent tests can be disregarded if the symptom based strategy is being followed, and the patient is otherwise recovering. In general, such multiple testing for clearance or diagnostic purposes should not be performed. Per the CDC, research indicates that after 10 days of symptoms, viral culture studies indicate that individuals are not infectious any longer even if RNA is identified in the nasal epithelium (which is what explains the positive tests in patients after 10 days or even longer in some cases). Please refer to the CDC Memo about this for more information ([https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/duration-isolation.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fcommunity%2Fstrategy-discontinue-isolation.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/duration-isolation.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fcommunity%2Fstrategy-discontinue-isolation.html))
COVID-19 Return to Work Guidelines for Fresno County

5. Reminder: Masks must be used around other people—this means both at work and in social/public spaces. For confirmed COVID-19 positive individuals, they must wear a mask in their home to protect their family members.

6. Definitions:

Other symptoms: People with COVID-19 have had a wide range of symptoms reported — ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness. Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. People with any of the following symptoms may have COVID-19:

- Fever or 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 or vomiting
- Diarrhea

This list does not include all possible symptoms. Please refer to the CDC website for an updated list of symptoms available at [www.cdc.gov/covid19](http://www.cdc.gov/covid19).

Severe and critically illness: individuals that were admitted to the hospital and required supplemental oxygen and had multiple organ dysfunction.

Immunocompromised: cancer patients who are undergoing chemotherapy, patients with HIV, patients within 1 year of stem cell or organ transplant, patient who are or were recently on high dose steroid treatment, patients with autoimmune disorders who are on immunosuppressive therapy.