



CDC UPDATES AND SHORTENS RECOMMENDED ISOLATION AND QUARANTINE PERIODS – WHAT THIS MEANS FOR THE WORKPLACE

December 31, 2021

In response to Omicron, a Covid Variant that is highly contagious with relatively mild symptoms, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has revised its recommended isolation and quarantine periods, effective Dec. 27, 2021. This new guidance presents employers with a new set of protocols as they try to keep their workplaces open during the pandemic. The most notable revision is the CDC's reduction of the recommended quarantine period from 10 days to 5 days.

Why the CDC Revised its Guidance. Data from South Africa and the UK, the first countries that dealt with Omicron, demonstrate that vaccine effectiveness against infection is approximately 35%. A Covid booster restores vaccine effectiveness against infection to 75%. Overall, vaccination decreases the risk of severe disease, hospitalization and death from Covid. That fact, combined with Omicron's unique characteristics, generated this new Guidance.

The CDC's Updated Guidance – Protocols.

Asymptomatic individuals who test positive for Covid:

Should isolate for five days, with the first day of isolation being either: (1) the day of receiving a positive test; or (2) the first day of symptoms. If the person develops symptoms during the quarantine they should remain in quarantine until symptom free. Once leaving isolation, the individual must wear a mask for 5 days.

Vaccinated asymptomatic individuals exposed to someone with Covid:

- This applies to persons who have been fully vaccinated in the last 6 months or received vaccination plus a booster in the last 2 months.
- After exposure, the individual must wear a high quality mask for 10 days. No quarantine is needed.

Vaccinated symptomatic individuals exposed to someone with Covid:

- If the individual develops symptoms, the CDC recommends quarantine for 5 days and thereafter until all symptoms have dissipated.
- The CDC recommends that person obtain a negative test before resuming normal activities. Word of caution, a vaccinated person with recent Covid symptoms has a high likelihood of receiving a false positive test result.

Unvaccinated individuals exposed to someone with Covid:

- For purposes of this guidance, “unvaccinated” means any person who is more than six months from receiving a vaccination and has not received a booster.

If asymptomatic: Isolate at home for 5 days and wear a mask for an additional 5 days.

If symptoms develop: Isolate at home for 5 days, or more until symptom free, and then obtain a Covid test to confirm negative Covid status.

What this Means for Employers. After the 21 month journey through the pandemic businesses nationwide have expressed an interest in “getting back to business” and bringing people back to the workplace as safely as possible. Given the unique characteristics of the Omicron variant and the nationwide prevalence of vaccinations, the CDC's new guidance is a recognition of this reality.

Related Practices

Labor and Employment

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