

CDC Shortens Recommended Isolation and Quarantine Periods

On Monday, December 27, 2021, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) shortened the recommended isolation and quarantine period for certain individuals infected with or exposed to COVID-19. The new recommendations come in light of evidence that the majority of SARS-CoV-2 transmissions occur in the 1-2 days prior to onset of symptoms and the 2-3 days after. The CDC's new recommendations, outlined below, will be a welcome change for many employers struggling with staffing shortages as it will allow many employees to either remain at work or return to work sooner after infection or exposure.

Isolation for Infected Individuals

Under the CDC's new guidelines, an individual infected with COVID-19 should isolate for 5 days instead of the previously recommended 10-day period. If the individual is asymptomatic at the end of the 5-day period, the individual can resume normal activity but should wear a mask for at least 5 days following the end of the isolation period.

If, after 5 days, the individual has symptoms, the individual should remain isolated until his or her symptoms resolve. Once symptoms are resolved, the individual can resume normal activity but should wear a mask for at least 5 additional days following the end of the isolation period.

All isolation periods begin on the day the individual tests positive for COVID-19.

Quarantine After Exposure

The CDC also recommends a shorter quarantine period, if any, for individuals exposed to COVID-19.

For individuals who: (1) have received a booster shot; or (2) are fully vaccinated and not yet eligible for a booster (those who either completed the primary series of Pfizer or Moderna vaccine within the last 6 months or completed the primary series of J&J vaccine within the last 2 months), CDC recommends that they wear a mask around others for 10 days but there is no required quarantine period.

For individuals who: (1) are unvaccinated; or (2) are more than 6 months out from

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their second Pfizer or Moderna dose, or more than 2 months after the J&J vaccine, and who have not yet received a COVID-19 booster, CDC recommends that they quarantine for 5 days following exposure to an individual with COVID-19. The quarantine period should be followed by strict mask use for an additional 5 days. The CDC's guidance also recognizes that there may be certain instances in which 5-day quarantine is not feasible. In these instances, it is strongly recommended that the exposed individual wear a well-fitting mask at all times when around others for 10 days after exposure.

All individuals who are exposed to COVID-19 should receive a test for SARS-CoV-2 at 5 days after exposure. If symptoms occur, individuals should immediately quarantine until a negative test confirms symptoms are not attributable to COVID-19.

Employers should update their COVID-19 policies to reflect the revised isolation and quarantine periods. If you have questions regarding the CDC's recommendations, or if we can help you draft or revise a COVID-19 policy, including CMS or OSHA ETS-compliant policies and procedures, please contact Brittany Lopez Naleid, [Shannon Toole](#) or your Reinhart attorney.

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