

New CDC and Wisconsin Guidance Contain Options to Reduce Length of Quarantine

The CDC Guidance

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently issued [revised guidance](#) with options for reducing the length of quarantine for individuals who are asymptomatic, but have had close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19. While the CDC still acknowledges that the 14-day quarantine period provides the greatest protection from spreading the virus, they also recognize that a full 14-day quarantine period can be a burden for employers and employees alike.

The CDC's new guidance applies only to individuals who have been in close contact with a COVID-19 positive person, but are not showing symptoms. The new guidance provides the following options for reduced quarantine:

- An individual with no symptoms can end quarantine 10 days after exposure without testing;
- An individual with no symptoms can end quarantine seven days after exposure if they took a COVID-19 test no earlier than day five of quarantine and that test came back negative.

There remains a risk of developing COVID-19 for a full 14 days after exposure. Thus, the CDC continues to endorse a 14-day quarantine period. Where an individual ends quarantine before 14 days, the individual should continue to monitor their health, practice social distancing, wear a face covering and immediately isolate and notify health officials if they do develop symptoms.

The Wisconsin Guidance

Consistent with the new CDC guidance, Wisconsin's Department of Health Services has updated its own [quarantine guidance](#) to permit reduced quarantine options for asymptomatic individuals. The Wisconsin guidance is effective December 7, 2020. There are a few key takeaways from the Wisconsin guidance:

- An individual with no symptoms can end quarantine seven days after exposure if they took a COVID-19 test no earlier than day six of quarantine and that test came back negative (more restrictive than the CDC guidance, which permits the test on day five).

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- Point of care antigen tests are acceptable to use for the purpose of reducing duration of quarantine, but PCR (non-rapid) tests are preferable.
- High-risk, congregate settings (e.g., long-term care facilities) should assess on a case-by-case basis whether potential benefits of shortened quarantine outweigh the risks of post-quarantine transmission.

Employers should remain diligent in reviewing CDC, state and local health guidelines. Employers with questions regarding the new guidelines or other COVID-19 developments should contact Brittany Lopez Naleid, [Shannon \(Toole\) West](#), [Matthew DeLange](#) or a member of Reinhart's [Labor and Employment Practice](#).

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