Responding and Returning to Work After a COVID-19 Exposure or Illness – Oregon

COVID-19 Exposure Procedures

If you have had a suspected or confirmed cased of COVID-19, you are encouraged to take the following steps:

1. **Remove the infected, or potentially infected, employee from the workplace/jobsite:** Prior to employee departure, obtain a full list of exposed workers (i.e., individuals who worked in close proximity (three to six feet without face covering/mask for longer than 15 minutes, per the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) Physical Distancing guidelines) with the individual in the previous 14 days).

2. **Determine which employees may have been exposed to the virus and may need to take additional precautions:** Inform employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace, but maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act. Instruct potentially exposed employees to stay home for 14 days; employees may telework if possible, and self-monitor for symptoms as outlined by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

   - COVID-19 symptoms have been reported from asymptomatic to severe illness. Symptoms may appear **2–14 days after exposure to the virus.** People with these 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, and diarrhea.

3. **Investigate**: Just as you would investigate a workplace injury (i.e., slip and fall), you must do the same for suspected or confirmed COVID-19 cases and document your investigation. The local state health authority or county health department will conduct contact tracing for all COVID-19 positive tests and provide the findings to assist with the determination of work-relatedness of the confirmed case or exposure.

   Under OSHA's Recording Cases of Coronavirus Disease recordkeeping requirements, COVID-19 is a recordable illness, and employers are responsible for recording cases of COVID-19, if all of the following are met:

   - The case is a confirmed case of COVID-19, as defined by the CDC;

   - The case is work-related as defined by 29 CFR § 1904.5; and

   - The case involves one or more of the general recording criteria set forth in 29 CFR § 1904.7.

4. **Cleaning and sanitizing the work area:** Rarely will you need to shut down your facility. If it has been less than seven days since the sick employee has been in the facility, barricade areas used by the sick person for prolonged periods of time:

   - Wait 24 hours or as long as possible before cleaning and disinfecting to minimize potential for other employees being exposed to respiratory droplets.

   - During this waiting period, open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in these areas.

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If it has been seven days or more since the sick employee used the facility, additional cleaning and disinfection is not necessary. Continue routinely cleaning and disinfecting all high-touch surfaces in the facility. Follow the CDC Guidance for Businesses Responding to COVID-19.

5. **Coming back to work:** According to CDC Return to Work Guidance, individuals may return to work in the following situations:

- **Individuals who think or know they had COVID-19 and had symptoms** may return to work if**:**

  a. Ten days have passed since symptoms first appeared, **and**

  b. 24 hours with no fever without the use of fever-reducing medications, **and**

  c. Other symptoms of COVID-19 are improving*.

  * Note that loss of taste and smell may persist for weeks or months after recovery and need not delay the end of isolation.

  As of September 10, 2020, CDC recommends using a "symptom-based strategy" for discontinuing isolation and returning to work. Oregon Health Authority as of July 23, 2020 also does not recommend retesting to determine when to discontinue isolation and return to work, except in "rare situations". The reasoning: for many confirmed cases low levels of the virus may remain in the body for up to three months, so if that person is retested within three months they may keep testing positive even though they are highly unlikely to be contagious.

- **Tested positive for COVID-19 but had no symptoms** may return to work if**:**

  a. Ten days have passed since test date

  If you develop symptoms after testing positive, follow the guidance above for "Individuals who think or know they had COVID-19 and had symptoms."

- **Anyone who has been around a person with COVID-19** may return to work if:

  a. Anyone who has close contact with someone with COVID-19 should stay home for 14 days **after exposure,** the time it takes to develop the illness.

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