

## FAQ

### Best practices when an employee tests positive for COVID-19

*Recommendations from [NC DHHS](#) based on CDC guidance*

#### **What should I do if an employee/contractor tests positive for COVID-19?**

Ensure the ill person does not return to the workplace until ALL quarantine requirements have been met as follows:

- At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since recovery (resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications);
- The individual has improvement in symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath);
- At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.

#### **What should I do if an employee/contractor tests positive for COVID-19 but does not have symptoms?**

Per CDC guidelines, if an employee has been diagnosed with COVID-19 but does not have symptoms, they should remain out of work until 10 days have passed since the date of their first positive COVID-19 diagnostic test results, assuming they have not subsequently developed symptoms since their positive test.

#### **What should I tell my other employees/contractors?**

Health information that you collect from your employees in this context needs to be kept confidential. Notify employees who had close contact with the ill person that they may have been exposed to COVID-19 without disclosing the name and identifying information of the ill person. CDC defines close contact as being less than 6 feet away from someone for 15 minutes or more.

#### **Do I need to shut down my business?**

The CDC specifically says that, in most cases, businesses do **not** need to shut down because a worker contracts COVID-19. Instead, the CDC recommends that businesses wait 24 hours or as long as practical, and then clean and disinfect the ill person's work area. Also, a business should clean and disinfect all frequently touched surfaces. This step should be completed while the business is closed to ensure a thorough cleaning and disinfection. People cleaning and disinfecting

should wear all proper PPE for protection against the virus. *See next question for additional info on handling cases of workers in close contact with the ill worker.*

### Do my employees/contractors have to quarantine at home?

For workers who were **not** in close contact (within 6 feet, for at least 15 minutes) with the ill worker, no action is required. For any worker that was in close contact with the ill worker you have two choices:

1. Test-based strategy — Exclude from work until:
  - Negative results of an FDA Emergency Use Authorized COVID-19 molecular assay for detection of SARS-CoV-2 RNA from at least two consecutive respiratory specimens collected  $\geq 24$  hours apart (total of two negative specimens).

-OR-

2. Time-based strategy — Exclude from work until:
  - 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 or test-based strategy should be used. Note, because symptoms cannot be used to gauge where these individuals are in the course of their illness, it is possible that the duration of viral shedding could be longer or shorter than 10 days after their first positive test.

Note: If not testing at all, the waiting period is 14 days: Most workplaces should follow the [Public Health Recommendations for Community-Related Exposure](#) and instruct potentially exposed employees to stay home for 14 days, telework if possible, and [self-monitor for symptoms](#).

### What can I do to limit the spread of COVID-19 at my business?

Follow the [guidance issued by NCDHHS](#) and ensure that all owners, operators, managers, and employees are properly trained to protect themselves and others from infection and spread of COVID-19. NCRLA worked with food safety and public health experts to create a [free online training program](#) to assist businesses adapt to operating in the pandemic. Participating business get listed on the website

and receive marketing materials. Most importantly, following the guidance reduces your liability and reduces the likelihood of shutdown.

Here are some key steps:

- Visit the Count On Me NC website to access free 30-minute training programs for every level of staff and business operation: [countonmenc.org/](https://countonmenc.org/)
- Per NCDHHS guidance, encourage your employees and guests to wear face coverings even if they are not required in your city/county.
- Consider implementing heightened employee health screenings every day to maintain a safer work environment.

### **Should I report a positive COVID-19 test to the health department?**

Businesses are encouraged but not required to report to the health department. When an ill worker has a positive test, public health officials will follow-up with the individual and assist with [contract tracing](#). Contact tracing identifies people that have recently been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19. This helps to more rapidly identify those who may have been exposed to COVID-19 and quickly get them the necessary supports and resources that can help protect them and their loved ones. You can expect to hear from contact tracers should an employee or patron test positive as results are communicated to NCDHHS for follow-up and tracking.

### **What should I do to clean my business?**

Close off areas used by the ill person and increase air circulation to those areas (for example by opening outside doors and windows and bringing in fans). Clean and disinfect the ill person's work area. Also, a business should clean and disinfect all frequently touched surfaces. This step should be completed while the restaurant is closed at night to ensure a thorough cleaning and disinfection. People cleaning and disinfecting should wear all proper PPE for protection against the virus.

### **What should I say publicly to my customers and to the media?**

Business owners are not required to make a public statement regarding this issue; however, it is best practice to be in front of the issue by making a statement on your website or social media letting customers know about the situation and the steps you have put into place to clean and disinfect your establishment and monitor employees. NCRLA has created a [COVID PR Toolkit for Hospitality Businesses](#).

**Where can I find more resources for handling COVID-19 positive employees?**

- FDA - <https://www.fda.gov/food/food-safety-during-emergencies/what-do-if-you-have-covid-19-confirmed-positive-or-exposed-workers-your-food-production-storage-or>
- CDC - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html>