COVID-19: When to Return to Work

3/15/2021

If you have been close to someone who has COVID-19, or if you have or might have it, follow these guidelines for when to stay home and when you can return to the workplace. These guidelines are for most workers.

People who work in health care facilities, schools or child care, and some other workplaces may have different guidelines for when they should return to work. In these situations, the Minnesota Department of Health will be in contact with your employer, and your employer will tell you when to return to work.

COVID-19 symptoms can include fever, cough, shortness of breath, chills, headache, muscle pain, sore throat, fatigue, congestion, or loss of taste or smell. Other less common symptoms include gastrointestinal symptoms like nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea.

If you were in close contact with someone who has COVID-19

In general, close contact means you were within 6 feet of a person who has COVID-19 for 15 minutes or more throughout the course of a day (24 hours). However, even shorter periods of time or longer distances can result in spread of the virus. This could include someone you live with. COVID-19 can take up to 14 days to make you sick, and some people with COVID-19 never feel sick, so you need to separate yourself from others so you don’t spread the virus without knowing it.

- Tell your boss, and work from home if you can.
- Get tested. It is best to wait at least five days after the last time you were close to the person with COVID-19. If you get tested too soon, the test may not be able to detect the virus.
- The safest option is to stay home and away from others for 14 days. In certain situations, there may be options to end your quarantine earlier.
  - If you are fully vaccinated, you may not need to quarantine.
  - For information on when to quarantine, visit Close Contacts and Tracing (https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/close.html).
- If you get sick or have a positive test, continue to stay home and follow the instructions below for people who have COVID-19 or COVID-19 symptoms.
If you have COVID-19, or have symptoms and do not get tested

Stay home until all three of these things are true:

- It has been at least 10 days since your symptoms first started.
  
  AND
  
  - You are fever-free for 24 hours, without using fever reducing medicine.

  AND
  
  - Your symptoms of COVID-19 are better.

- You may need to stay home longer than 10 days if your symptoms are not improving or become worse, you have conditions that weaken your immune system, or you have been in the hospital. Talk to your doctor or clinic for instructions.

- Stay apart from others and do not share anything that others touch (phones, knives and forks, etc.). Wear a mask if you have to be in the same room as others.

- Tell your boss and work from home if you can.

If you have COVID-19 symptoms and your test was negative

If you receive a negative test result but have symptoms, talk to your doctor or other health care provider. If they say you have a different illness or your symptoms are from a chronic condition, follow their advice for how long to stay home.

If they do not know your symptoms are from another illness or condition, you should still stay home from work and other places until you do not have a fever and you feel better, meaning your symptoms have improved enough that you feel well enough to go about your daily activities.

If you are a health care worker, talk to your employer, as their recommendations might be different.