

CDC Shortens Recommended Isolation and Quarantine Periods for COVID-19 Illness and Exposure

Law and the Workplace Blog on **December 28, 2021**

On December 27, 2021, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (“CDC”) [updated its guidance](#) regarding quarantine and isolation periods for the general population after testing positive for or being exposed to COVID-19. The updated guidance shortens the recommended timeframe for isolation following a COVID-19 diagnosis for individuals regardless of vaccination status. It also shortens the recommended quarantine period following a COVID-19 exposure for vaccinated individuals.

Isolation Following a COVID-19 Diagnosis

Specifically, the CDC has shortened the recommended time for isolation for those who have tested positive for COVID-19 from 10 days to 5 days, if the individual is asymptomatic or symptoms are resolving by that time (though individuals who continue to have a fever should maintain isolation until the fever resolves). The individual may then end isolation but should wear a mask when around others for at least 5 additional days. This recommendation applies regardless of vaccination status. In making this new recommendation, the CDC noted that the current science demonstrates that “the majority of SARS-CoV-2 transmission occurs early in the course of illness, generally in the 1-2 days prior to onset of symptoms and the 2-3 days after.”

Quarantine Following a COVID-19 Exposure

Additionally, the CDC updated its recommendations for those who have been exposed to COVID-19 but are asymptomatic. Individuals who: (i) have received two doses of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine within the last 6 months; (ii) completed the single dose of the Johnson and Johnson vaccine within the last 2 months; and/or (iii) have received a booster, do not have to isolate after a COVID-19 exposure but are advised to wear a mask around others for 10 days. Such individuals are also advised to take a COVID-19 test on the fifth day after the exposure.

For asymptomatic individuals who have been exposed and who are: (i) unvaccinated or (ii) more than six months from their second dose of Pfizer or Moderna or more than 2 months after the single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine and have yet to receive their booster shot, the CDC now recommends that these individuals quarantine for 5 days after a COVID-19 exposure and wear a mask around others for 5 days after. If a 5 day quarantine is not possible, the CDC recommends that these individuals wear a mask at all times for 10 days after the exposure. Such individuals are also advised to take a COVID-19 test on the fifth day following the exposure.

In all cases following an exposure, if an individual develops symptoms consistent with COVID-19, they are advised to begin quarantining and get tested.

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While this new CDC guidance shortens the recommended isolation and quarantine period recommendations as the federal level, it should be noted that state and/or local governments or health authorities may maintain more stringent requirements or guidelines. Additionally, individuals working in particular industries may be subject to different isolation/quarantine requirements.

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