



Return to Work After COVID Infection or Exposure

OSU Student Health Services clinical staff will not provide individual return to work notes for students who have been infected with or exposed to COVID-19. We feel it is up to the employer and employee to work out an agreement regarding the best time to return to work based on the guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Oregon Health Authority (OHA) below:

1. Otherwise healthy individuals with symptoms consistent with COVID19 and/or a positive test should self-isolate* for 5 days starting on the day that symptoms begin. If the individual does not have symptoms, then self-isolation starts on the date of the positive test. Day 0 is the first day of symptoms or a positive viral test. Day 1 is the first full day after symptoms developed or the test specimen was collected. They can leave isolation when at least 5 full days have passed, they are fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medication such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen, and their symptoms have improved significantly. After 5 days of isolation the individual should continue to wear a mask at all times around others for an additional 5 days to complete a full 10 days of infection precautions. They may leave isolation after 5 days but should still avoid travel and avoid being around people who are high risk for the full 10 days.
2. Individuals with a compromised immune system or hospitalization related to a severe COVID-19 infection should follow the self-isolation guidelines above but should extend the period to 20 days.
3. Individuals who have a positive test and no symptoms should self-isolate and then mask as above. If the individual develops symptoms during that 10- day period, they should restart isolation. In this case the first day of self-isolation becomes the day of symptom onset and they should follow the guidelines in step 1.
4. PCR Tests can remain positive for weeks or months after the infection has resolved, so retesting with PCR prior to return to work is generally not helpful and is not part of current CDC guidelines. Persons who wish to retest may use an antigen test after 5 days, but this will not shorten the need for masking for the full 10 days. If an antigen test is positive after 5 days – the infected person must remain in isolation for a full 10 days.
5. EXPOSED PERSONS WITHOUT A BOOSTER SHOT: Persons who have not had a booster shot (or did not complete their Moderna or Pfizer second dose within the past 6 months or had a JNJ shot in past 2 months) who have a significant exposure (six feet or closer to an infected individual for more than 15 minutes in a 24-hour period) to COVID-19 should quarantine** for 5 days from the time of exposure and get tested at day 5, even if they don't have symptoms. They should continue to wear a well fitted mask for another 5 days to complete a full 10 days of infection precautions. If they develop covid-19 symptoms at any time during the 10 days, they should immediately isolate and be re-tested.

6. EXPOSED PERSONS who have HAD A BOOSTER SHOT: individuals who have had a booster shot or recently completed their vaccine series (less than 6 months ago for Pfizer or Moderna and less than 2 months ago for JNJ) do not need to quarantine after contact with someone who had COVID-19 unless they develop symptoms. However, they should get tested 5 days after their exposure, even if they don't have symptoms. They should also wear a mask indoors in public for a full 10 days following exposure. If they develop symptoms any time in the 10 days after exposure they should immediately isolate and be re-tested.

These periods of contagiousness (5 days) or potential contagiousness (10 days) after exposure have been carefully explored by public health entities, so employers and employees alike should feel comfortable safely returning to work if the guidelines are followed.

We still strongly recommend all individuals wear a mask, frequently wash their hands, and social distance in all individuals, including those who have recovered from an infection.

Oregon Health Authority General Guidance for Employer can be found here:

<https://sharedsystems.dhsoha.state.or.us/DHSForms/Served/Ie2342C.pdf>

*Self-isolation refers to a period of time where an individual infected with COVID-19 should avoid being around others because they are potentially contagious. This means staying at home in your own room, eating meals alone, and, if possible, using your own private bathroom. Wear a well fitted mask if you must be around others in your home. Individuals should only leave isolation to obtain urgent medical care.

**Quarantine refers to a period where an individual with a significant exposure to COVID-19 should avoid being around others because they could be developing an active infection during that period. This means staying at home in your own room, eating meals alone, and, if possible, using your own private bathroom. Wear a well fitted mask if you must be around others in your home. Individuals should only leave quarantine to obtain urgent medical care.