



January 24, 2022

Dear Employer,

The Knox County Health Department (KCHD) cannot provide 'return-to-work' letters for all cases or contacts. It is important that employers work with their employees and medical providers, much like they currently do for other illnesses, while following the CDC quarantine guidance.

The CDC and TDH are now recommending that all asymptomatic contacts should, at a minimum, wear a well-fitting mask around others for 10 days after their exposure to a case (the date of last close contact is considered day 0). Any contact that becomes symptomatic after exposure should isolate from others and test. In addition, contacts who are unvaccinated, or have not received a booster when they became eligible to receive one (who are not recently vaccinated with the primary series), should quarantine for 5 days from their last exposure to the case. For more detailed information on isolation and quarantine length, as well as who is required to quarantine and how quarantine is affected by living in the same household as a case, please visit [Isolation-QuarantineRelease.pdf \(tn.gov\)](#).

The following is a summary of the new guidance for contacts:

- Regardless of vaccination status, contacts should wear a mask for a total of 10 days from last exposure, or until receiving a negative test result.
  - In addition, contacts who are unvaccinated or who are eligible for a booster and have not received one should quarantine for 5 days from last exposure to the case.
- For household contacts, the last day of exposure is the case's final day in isolation. If a case remains in isolation beyond day 5, the last day of exposure for the contact will be extended by the same number of days.
- Testing is recommended for all contacts on day 5 after last exposure, however, it is very important that anyone who becomes symptomatic isolates and gets tested.
- Healthcare personnel follow different guidance than the general public for returning to their workplaces. Employers of these workers should refer to [Guidance for Healthcare Personnel with SARS-CoV-2 Infection or Exposure | CDC](#).

Cases should always stay home for a minimum of 5 days, which begins the day after the start of their symptoms (or positive test result if they do not have symptoms). If cases are feeling better and do not have a fever for 24 hours on day 5, they may leave isolation on day 6 if they wear a mask through day 10. Cases may consider taking an antigen test towards the end of their isolation period. If the test is positive, they should isolate until day 10. If a follow-up PCR test is positive, cases do not need to re-enter isolation as long as they have completed the 5-day isolation and their symptoms have improved for a minimum of 24 hours.

The CDC recommends the following actions to reduce the risk of becoming sick/spreading an illness to others:

- Get vaccinated and boosted
- Wear a mask indoors
- Stay at least 6 feet away from others
- Avoid crowds and poorly ventilated spaces
- Wash your hands often
- Cover coughs and sneezes

- Monitor your health daily and stay home if you start feeling unwell

More information can be found at the following link: [How to Protect Yourself & Others | CDC](#)

Implementing these guidelines in your business will help ensure the safety of not only your employees, but all Knox County citizens.

Helpful resources are posted on our website with isolation/quarantine guidelines. Additionally, our phone bank is available Monday-Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. to answer any questions. They can be reached at (865) 215-5555.

Thank you,



Martha Buchanan, MD  
Public Health Officer