

# Ever-changing quarantine and isolation guidelines cause confusion for employers

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*Q What are the current COVID-19 rules regarding leave and quarantine for a positive test? Should it begin from symptom onset or from test date? We want to allow employees to return to work as soon as possible, but we also don't want to risk having employees return to work before it's acceptable.*

A The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is making a distinction between quarantine and isolation. It's guidance also varies depending on whether it's a matter of exposure or a positive COVID-19 test. According to the CDC, individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19 are required "isolate" when they have COVID-19, even if they aren't exhibiting symptoms.

To calculate the isolation period, start at day zero, which is the first day of symptoms or a positive viral test. A person with symptoms may treat day 1 as the first full day after symptoms develop even if the positive test is taken later. A person without symptoms must calculate the isolation period based on the date of the positive test.

A COVID-19 positive individual is advised to stay home for five days and isolate from others in the home. Ending isolation is evaluated based on whether there were symptoms. Isolation may end after at least five full days if no symptoms occurred. Isolation for a person with symptoms can end after five full days if you are fever free (without the use of fever-reducing medication) and symptoms have improved. Individuals with severe COVID-19 symptoms should isolate for at least 10 days. Regardless, individuals are advised to wear a well-fitting mask through day 10.

Arizona law doesn't have specific mask, quarantine, or isolation requirements. Therefore, you are free to follow the shifting CDC guidance, which can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/quarantine-isolation.html>. Employers outside of Arizona should confirm that your specific locality

doesn't require you to follow more restrictive guidelines before relying on the CDC guidance.

Keep in mind the CDC guidance is regularly in flux to address new or more prevalent variants and acknowledge new information gleaned about COVID-19. While this information is current at the time of this printing (according to the CDC website, it was last updated January 20, 2022), you should confirm its accuracy before implementing the guidance in this article.

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