

Revised January 14, 2021

Dear Santa Clara County Employers,

Thank you for all that you are doing in these unprecedented times to help our community stay safe and recover economically. We truly appreciate all your efforts to modify your businesses, and everyday lives, to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 and save lives.

Exclusion from Work

According to the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), persons who have symptoms consistent with COVID-19 or have tested positive for COVID-19 and some individuals who have been identified as exposed to COVID-19 should be instructed to stay at home for a period of time and must not attend in-person work.

Individuals who test positive for COVID-19 may provide documentation of their positive test result to indicate their need for exclusion from in-person work during their period of isolation. Given the burden COVID-19 has placed on the healthcare system, most employees who must isolate or quarantine will NOT able to provide a letter from a doctor or nurse indicating their need to do so. You are encouraged to provide access to sick leave, as well as telework, and other accommodations *without* individual documentation from a doctor or nurse upon disclosure from an employee that they have been instructed to isolate or quarantine.

Criteria for Returning to Work for COVID-19 Cases

An individual who tested positive for COVID-19 may return to work if:

- it has been at least 5 full days since their symptoms started (or at least 5 full days since the date of their positive COVID-19 test, if asymptomatic),
- their symptoms have improved,
- at least 24 hours have passed since their last fever, without the use of fever-reducing medications,
- AND a COVID-19 test* collected on day 5 or later is negative

**Antigen test preferred*

If they are unwilling or unable to test on Day 5 or later, or if their Day 5 test is positive, they should continue to isolate through Day 10. If fever is still present or symptoms are not resolving, continue isolation until fever-free for 24 hours and symptoms are resolving.

Criteria for Returning to Work for COVID-19 Close Contacts*

All close contacts are recommended to test right away and again on Day 2-5 following a known exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19. They should also wear a mask around others and watch for symptoms for 10 days. If they develop symptoms at any time, they should seek another test immediately and stay home.

If they are **boosted** or **vaccinated but not yet eligible for a booster dose**, quarantine is NOT required.

If they are **vaccinated and eligible for a booster dose but have not yet received one**, they must quarantine, with the exception that they may return to work, but only if:

- A negative test is obtained within 3-5 days after last exposure to a case
- They wear a well-fitting mask around others for 10 days
- They continue to have no symptoms

If they are **unvaccinated** they should get tested on day 5 after exposure and should ALSO quarantine for at least 5 days, in addition to following other recommendations for close contacts. Quarantine may end on Day 6 if symptoms are not present and if a test collected on Day 5 or later is negative. Continue to quarantine through Day 10 if unable to test or choosing not to test.

See [CDPH isolation and quarantine guidelines](#) for more information or visit [sccstayhome.org](#).

**The above guidance does NOT apply to those living or working in congregate settings such as jails and shelters, nor to and healthcare providers in any kind of healthcare facility. Persons who work in school settings should follow the [CDPH K-12 Isolation and Quarantine Guidance](#).*

Medical Notes and Clearances

Both the CDC and the Santa Clara County Public Health Department (PHD) **discourage employers from requiring a medical note for clearance to return to work after an individual has COVID-19**. These notes create unnecessary hardships for employees and cause strain on the healthcare system to produce these notes. Employees are considered no longer contagious when they meet the criteria described above.

Your employee who had, or was a close contact of someone who had, COVID-19 may print this letter out to serve the purpose of 1) indicating the need to isolate or quarantine (when coupled with symptoms, a positive test result, or verbal or written notification of exposure), 2) showing proof that they can return to work as long as they meet the criteria above (detailed further at [www.sccstayhome.org](#)).

Additional Resources

- General Santa Clara County Information for Home Isolation and Quarantine:
<https://www.sccstayhome.org>
- What To Do When Someone at the Workplace Tests Positive for COVID-19:
<https://covid19.sccgov.org/business-guidance#employee>
- General Santa Clara County Information for Employers:
<https://www.sccgov.org/sites/covid19/Pages/business-guidance.aspx>

Thank you for all that you do to keep our community healthy.