



Health, Housing & Community Services Department
Public Health Officer Unit Communicable Disease Prevention and Control Program

covid19@cityofberkeley.info

www.cityofberkeley.info

What to do if your co-worker has tested positive for COVID-19:

Learning your co-worker may have COVID-19 can be very alarming. It is cause for concern and action, but not panic. Remember that your employer, the public health department, and you have tools to keep your home, workplace and the public safe!

How will I find out?

You may be contacted by your co-worker, your employer or the health department informing you of potential close contact with someone who tested positive with COVID-19. You will likely not be told who the co-worker is in order to preserve confidentiality. It is understandable that there may be concern, but it is important to respect the privacy of your coworkers and trust your local health department to identify and contact those at highest risk.

Was I exposed?

The local health department opens a *case investigation* whenever someone tests positive for COVID-19. They will interview the person who tested positive for any close contacts (*contact within 6 feet for greater than 15 minutes*) while infectious (*starting 2 days prior to having symptoms or 2 days prior to testing positive if asymptomatic*). You will be contacted by the health department or employer if you are determined to be a close contact of a case. It is important to keep your phone with you and answer if you receive a call from an unknown number, especially if you know a co-worker has been sick. The health department official or supervisor who contacts you will go through next steps and answer your questions. You will not be contacted by the health department if you are not a close contact.

What symptoms should I look out for? Am I going to get sick?

Whether or not you have had close contact with COVID-19, you should stay home if you develop any of these symptoms: fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion, runny nose, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea. If you do develop any of those symptoms, you should immediately isolate yourself from others (including your family) and contact your healthcare provider to get tested. If you begin to have trouble breathing, have high fevers, or feel weak, do not hesitate to call 9-1-1. COVID-19 can cause severe disease or no symptoms at all in anyone of any age, race, sex or level of health. That being said, we do know that some people have a higher chance of getting severe disease. These people include those over age 60, persons with disease affecting their heart or lungs, persons with diabetes or severe obesity and those with disease or medications that cause a decreased immune system.

Do I have to quarantine? When am I safe to go back to work?

If you have been notified that are a close contact to a confirmed case of COVID-19, you should immediately begin to *quarantine*. Quarantine is when there is a potential for infection and lasts 14 days after last contact with the infected person, which is the virus' *incubation period* or the time it takes from exposure to develop an infection. During this time you should not work, avoid any group settings and stay distanced from others, including your family. You must finish quarantine prior to returning to work, even if you test negative. It is important to let your medical provider know if you begin to develop symptoms during this period, as you

will likely need testing and will transition to *isolation*, which is a version of quarantine for those who have or are suspected to have the disease. If you test positive, you can return to work after you finish at least a 10 day *isolation* from either the start of your symptoms and 24 hours from your last fever OR 10 days from your test result if you do not experience any symptoms. In either situation, you do not need a work note from your doctor.

Is it safe to work with someone who had COVID-19?

Someone who has completed quarantine or isolation is no longer contagious and poses no risk to others. Areas that were used by someone who had COVID-19 can be used without risk of disease once they undergone COVID-specific disinfection or if they've been unused for 7 days and undergone normal cleaning.

Can I get fired or have my hours cut while I'm sick or unable to go to work?

The State of California also has many [laws](#) to protect against discrimination many of these situations. This [fact sheet](#) from the California Department of Fair Employment and Housing contains information about how to use these laws. If you have been discriminated against, the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) can help you file a complaint by calling 1800-669-4000 or on their website at www.eeoc.gov.

I am supposed to quarantine, but how will I pay my bills?

You should talk to your employer regarding tele-work options if possible and if you are well enough to work from home. If you are unable to telework, your employer is required to allow you time off from work while you complete isolation or quarantine. The US Department of Labor, via the "[FFCRA](#)" law, requires employers to provide 2 weeks of paid sick leave for quarantined employees or caregivers of sick relatives. California provides disability and unemployment insurance for those required to isolate or quarantine due to COVID-19 infection for themselves or if they are a caregiver. Here is an [FAQ](#) and [guide](#) for California disability and unemployment insurance laws and benefits, as well as guides for Alameda County ([English](#) and [Spanish](#)).

Do I need testing? How do I get tested?

When you are identified as a close contact, you will be told if you should be tested. You can work with the health department and your supervisor on accessing available testing. The City of Berkeley offers [free testing sites](#) that are available for anyone. Most importantly, you should get tested if you develop any symptoms of COVID-19 by contacting your healthcare provider. Testing does not change isolation or quarantine periods and should not be used as a criteria for returning to work. You also do not need to have a negative test to return to work to show clearance of infection if you had COVID-19.

If I test positive what should I do?

Do not panic! Your healthcare provider or whoever notifies you of your positive result will support you through the next steps and isolation. You should notify your Occupational Health/HR department and your supervisor. Avoid contacting your co-workers, this can cause unnecessary alarm and they will be notified if they are a close contact by your employer or HR department.

How can I prevent myself from getting sick or transmitting COVID-19?

- Cover your mouth and nose with a mask when around others outside of your home.
- Stay home from work if you develop a fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion, runny nose, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea. Contact your health care provider for testing.
- Clean your hands often, with soap and water for 20 seconds or hand sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid sharing items or workspaces with others and thoroughly clean workspaces before and after use.

RESOURCES:

COVID-19

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/index.html>
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>
<https://www.cityofberkeley.info/covid19-protect-yourself/>
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/COVID-19-Quarantine-vs-Isolation.pdf>

Mental Health

<https://www.cityofberkeley.info/covid19-mental-health/>
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/mental-health-non-healthcare.html>

Employment

<https://www.cityofberkeley.info/covid19-worksite-exposure/>
https://www.cityofberkeley.info/uploadedFiles/Health_Human_Services/Public_Health/covid19/worksite-exposure-toolkit.pdf
<https://covid-19.acgov.org/covid19-assets/docs/recovery/worker-protection-eng-2020.06.16.pdf>
<https://www.dir.ca.gov/dlse/2019-Novel-Coronavirus.htm>

Paid Leave and Disability

<https://covid-19.acgov.org/recovery.page?>
<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/pandemic/ffcra-employer-paid-leave>
https://www.alamedaca.gov/files/sharedassets/public/alameda/econ-dev-amp-comm-services/job-loss-one-pager_alameda-county.pdf
https://www.edd.ca.gov/about_edd/coronavirus-2019/faqs/disability-paid-family-leave.htm
<https://www.labor.ca.gov/coronavirus2019/#chart>

Testing

<https://www.cityofberkeley.info/covid19-testing/>
<https://covid-19.acgov.org/testing.page>

Please contact the City of Berkeley at COVID19@cityofberkeley.info with any questions.

