

The First 48 Hours: How to Handle a Positive COVID-19 Diagnosis

As many states plan to re-open their economies, employers must be prepared to handle a potential rise in COVID-19 cases. This means knowing what to do if an employee tests positive, or if an employee has been exposed to someone who has COVID-19.

What to do first:

- **Don't allow employees into the workplace** if they're exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 or have tested positive
- **Ask the employee to identify everyone** they've worked in close proximity with (3-6 feet) in the last 14 days to ensure you get a full list of others that should be sent home.
- **Inform the employees** who've worked closely with a COVID-19 carrier of their possible exposure but **DO NOT** identify the name of the infected employee
- **Immediately send home employees** that may have been exposed to seek medical advice from their personal healthcare provider to determine whether a test or self-quarantine is appropriate
- **Designate a separate area** at your work site where employees who become ill during the work day can await transportation to their home or to medical care.
- **Inform building management** so they can take cleaning and disinfecting precautions they deem necessary
- **Provide all employees info** regarding COVID-19 so they can adhere to CDC guidelines
- **Remind all managers and employees** of COVID-19 safe work policies and best practices
- **Thoroughly disinfect the workplace** according to CDC guidelines



Employers should take steps to keep employees' health information confidential, as required by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). Employers should not identify the name of an infected employee. If an employee was infected on the job, OSHA has deemed COVID-19 as a recordable illness. You must, therefore, indicate such an incident on your OSHA Form 300 log.

How to clean & disinfect your workplace:

- **Close off areas** used by the ill persons.
- **Open outside doors** and windows to increase air circulation in the area
- If possible, **wait up to 24 hours** before beginning cleaning and disinfection to reduce exposure to respiratory droplets in the air
- **Clean and disinfect all areas** used by the sick person
- **Clean and disinfect all high-touch surfaces** like tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, sinks, etc.
- **Wear disposable gloves and gowns for all tasks** in the cleaning process, including handling the trash, and **wash hands often** for 20 seconds for longer
- **Additional cleaning and disinfection is not necessary** if more than 7 days has past since the person who is sick visited or used the facility
- Once the area has been appropriately disinfected, it can be **opened for use**.
- **Continue routine cleaning and disinfection**, which includes everyday practices that businesses and communities normally use to maintain a healthy environment.

For more information, read the CDC's guidelines for [Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility](#).



Cleaning with soap and water reduces the number of germs, dirt and impurities on the surface. Disinfecting **kills** germs on surfaces. Here is a [list of disinfectants](#) that meet the EPA's criteria for use against SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.

Make sure cleaning staff are properly trained:

- **Educate workers** performing cleaning, laundry, and trash pick-up to recognize the symptoms of COVID-19 and provide instruction about what to do if they develop symptoms within 14 days after their last possible exposure to the virus.
- **Develop policies for worker protection and provide training to all cleaning staff** on site prior to providing cleaning tasks. Training should include when to use PPE, what PPE is necessary, how to properly don (put on), use, and doff (take off) PPE, and how to properly dispose of PPE.
- **Ensure workers are trained on the hazards of the cleaning chemicals** used in the workplace in accordance with OSHA's Hazard Communication standard ([29 CFR 1910.1200](#)).
- **Comply with OSHA's standards** on Bloodborne Pathogens ([29 CFR 1910.1030](#)), including proper disposal of regulated waste, and PPE ([29 CFR 1910.132](#))

Advice to share with employees:

For employees who have tested positive for COVID-19 (or have been exposed to someone who has) **here is some advice you can share with them** while they seek medical advice from their personal healthcare provider to determine whether a test or self-quarantine is appropriate.

- **Stay home.** Go outside only to seek medical care
- **Have groceries, meals or medication dropped off** by family, friends or delivery services
- **Stay in a specific room** if possible and separate from others in their household
- **Avoid sharing** personal household items
- **Wear a cloth mask** that covers their nose and mouth
- **Clean hands** and high-touch **surfaces** often
- **Take care** of themselves with over-the-counter medicine and by staying hydrated
- **Seek medical immediate attention** if they have trouble breathing, persistent chest pain/pressure, new confusion or inability to arouse, bluish lips or face.