

Primer on COVID-19 Guidance on Testing and Isolation

Updated: January 25, 2022

In light of the rapidly-spreading Omicron variant of the COVID-19 virus, new guidance from public health officials has changed when people should get tests, and how long employees should avoid the workplace when sick.

This primer will explain some of the recent changes to help you and your business navigate the coming weeks, but is meant as a summary of publicly-available information at the time of publication, and should not be relied on as legal advice.

For full information or more detailed answers to questions, contact 8-1-1 or visit the [BC CDC website here.](#)

If someone feels sick:



Employers should not permit employees who are sick to be in the workplace until they have resolved whether they are required to test or isolate. Employers should remember that all employees are now mandated to receive 5 days of paid sick leave.

When to get a test?

If someone has mild symptoms and no risk factors for severe illness, they likely will not be advised to get a COVID test. If symptoms are severe (e.g., difficulty breathing), they should call 9-1-1 or visit the nearest emergency department. Testing is being limited currently to those who are immunocompromised, unvaccinated, or live/work in a high-risk setting.

To determine if someone should get a test:

- 1) Use the [B.C. COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool](#) to see if you need to be tested
- 2) Call 8-1-1 to speak to a health care professional free of charge, at any time, and get advice

How long to isolate and stay home?

The guidance on isolation has changed significantly.

1) If you have symptoms but testing is NOT recommended

At this time, most people don't need to be tested for COVID-19, and are not required to self-isolate or self-monitor for a set amount of time.

If you have symptoms but testing is not recommended, self-isolate until you feel well enough to return to regular activities and no longer have fever (without the use of medicines that reduce fever). There is no longer a 5 or 10 day requirement without a positive test.

2) If you have symptoms and testing IS recommended

Find the [nearest testing centre](#) and continue to self-isolate until you get your test results and follow instructions from public health.

If you test positive:

- Fully vaccinated people can end isolation after 5 days since the start of their symptoms, and should then wear a mask even where it isn't required for further 5 days.
- Unvaccinated or partially-vaccinated individuals should self-isolate for 10 days since the start of their symptoms.
- If you don't feel better after the 5 or 10 days, keep isolating until you do, or contact 8-1-1 for further guidance.

If you test negative:

- Self-isolate until you feel well enough to return to regular activities and no longer have fever (without the use of medicines that reduce fever).

Handling “Close Contacts”

If an employee is a “close contact” of someone who is sick or even tests positive, they do not need to isolate themselves. At this stage in the pandemic, close contacts are not required to self-isolate or take any special measures. They should monitor for symptoms – like anyone else – and take steps listed above if they become sick or develop symptoms.