

Primer on COVID-19 Guidance on Testing and Isolation

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 has caused some confusion for employers when it comes to handling employees who are sick.

This primer will explain some of the recent changes to help you and your business navigate the coming weeks.

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 received [5 days of paid sick leave](#).

When to get a test?

If someone has mild symptoms and no risk factors for severe illness, they may not need a COVID test. If symptoms are severe (e.g., difficulty breathing), they should call 9-1-1 or visit the nearest emergency department.

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
- 3) [Check your symptoms](#) and when to get tested

How long to isolate and stay home?

People who are symptomatic or test positive may need to self-isolate for a certain amount of time.

The length of time you will need to self-isolate depends on your situation and when your symptoms started, so make note of when you started feeling sick.

Those with symptoms should isolate and then determine if they need to get tested as noted above.

1) If you DON'T need a test:

If after doing the self-assessment or contacting 8-1-1, you are NOT recommended to get a test, then you can 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).

2) If you DO need to test, or are told to ASSUME positive:

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 or are told to assume 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 your symptoms improve and you feel well enough to return to regular activities. (if you had a fever, wait until it is gone).