The Testing Task Force has developed the following guidance for businesses creating return to work policies.

According to the CDC: “Employers should not require a COVID-19 test result or a healthcare provider’s note for employees who are sick to validate their illness, qualify for sick leave, or to return to work.

Under the American's with Disabilities Act, employers are permitted to require a doctor's note from your employees to verify that they are healthy and able to return to work. However, as a practical matter, be aware that healthcare provider offices and medical facilities may be extremely busy and not able to provide such documentation in a timely manner. Most people with COVID-19 have mild illness and can recover at home without medical care and can follow CDC recommendations to determine when to discontinue home isolation and return to work.”


Consider consulting with local infectious disease experts when making return to work decisions for individuals who might remain infectious longer than 10 days (e.g., severely immunocompromised). Wearing mask and social distancing is recommended.

Task Force recommendations are listed in the order of precedence as indicated from medical professionals.

1. **Symptom-based strategy. Exclude from work until:**

   - At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since recovery, defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); and,
   - At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.

**About symptoms:**

Symptoms may range from mild to severe. Symptoms may appear 2 to 14 days after exposure to the virus. People with these symptoms may have COVID-19:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea
Older adults and people who have severe underlying medical conditions like heart or lung disease or diabetes seem to be at higher risk for developing more serious complications from COVID-19 illness.


2. Time-based strategy. Exclude from work until:
   - 10 days have passed since the date of the first positive COVID-19 PCR or antigen test assuming that symptoms have not developed since testing positive. If symptoms do develop, then the symptom-based strategy should be used.

3. Test-based strategy. Exclude from work until:
   - Resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and
   - Improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath), and
   - 2 negative COVID-19 PCRs collected greater or equal to 24 hours apart.

(Note: Test-based strategy is strongly discouraged by the Testing Task Force as immunocompetent patients may continue to test positive for weeks or months after their illness, and are not considered contagious.)

Additional Resources:


Virginia Chamber of Commerce Get Back to Work plan: https://getvabacktowork.com/

CDC back to work recommendations: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/return-to-work.html


Data behind time-based strategy: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7185831