

COVID-19 Exposure and Testing Protocols Updated March 5, 2021

Background

The City of Seattle is working to protect the health and safety of its employees and that of the general public by following the guidance of federal, state, and local authorities to respond to the COVID-19 virus. As part of this effort, the City has updated workplace exposure and protocols for employees and managers. Staff reporting to City work sites should follow the protocols outlined throughout this document. These protocols are subject to change per updates to public health and CDC guidance.

What follows below are:

- Definitions related to COVID-19;
- Information on testing;
- Self-assessment and temperature screening guidance;
- Face covering guidance; and
- COVID-19 scenarios and workplace protocols.

Definitions

Sourced from the [Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#) and [Public Health Seattle-King County \(PHSKC\)](#)

- **COVID-19 (also known as “novel coronavirus”)** – a new virus strain spreading from person-to-person. Its symptoms include, but are not limited to, fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath and difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, and diarrhea. Symptoms may appear in as few as 2 days or as long as 14 days after exposure to the virus.
- **Asymptomatic:** an individual who is infected with COVID-19 but is not displaying symptoms.
- **Symptomatic:** an individual showing symptoms of COVID-19, as per the list of symptoms detailed in the definition of COVID-19 above.
- **Close contact:** the CDC defines a “close contact” as someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period* starting from 2 days before illness onset (or, for asymptomatic patients, 2 days prior to test specimen collection) until the time the patient is isolated.
** Individual exposures added together over a 24-hour period (e.g., three 5-minute exposures for a total of 15 minutes).*
- **Isolation:** is what you do if you have COVID-19 symptoms or have tested positive for COVID-19. Isolation means you stay home and away from others (including household members) for the recommended period of time to avoid spreading illness.
- **Quarantine:** is what you do if you have been exposed to COVID-19. Quarantine means you stay home and away from others for the recommended period of time in case you are infected and are contagious. Quarantine becomes isolation if you later test positive for COVID-19 or develop COVID-19 symptoms.

As always, employees are encouraged to follow the below public health guidance:

- Wear a face covering (required in public and at work with some exceptions – see face covering guidance below).
- Stay at least 6 feet (about 2 arms’ length) from other people outside your household.
- Monitor your health daily for [symptoms of COVID 19](#).
- Stay home while you are sick and avoid close contact with others.
- Wash hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds. If not available, use hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid contact with people who are sick.
- Cover your mouth/nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Immediately throw away the tissue and wash your hands.
- Follow [travel advisories](#) in effect.

This is a rapidly evolving situation, and protocol will be updated as deemed necessary by the City and in accordance with federal, state and local public health guidance. Further questions should be sent to the Seattle Department of Human Resources (SDHR) at SDHRCOVID@seattle.gov.

Information on testing

If you live, work, or regularly visit Seattle, and you are experiencing a symptom(s) of COVID-19 and/or you have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 within the past 14 days, you can be tested for free.

If you attended large gatherings, you MAY have been exposed. You are strongly urged to get tested for COVID-19 if you develop ANY symptoms.

Visit these websites for free testing locations in Seattle and King County:

- Testing sites in Seattle: <http://www.seattle.gov/mayor/covid-19/covid-19-testing>
- Testing sites in King County: <https://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/health/covid-19/testing.aspx>

Self-assessment and temperature screening guidance

Where employees are reporting to work sites, the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) has recommended that all employers put daily COVID-19 screening protocols in place in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 within workplaces. In accordance with DOH recommendations, the City of Seattle is implementing daily health screenings for all employees and visitors entering a City facility or worksite. Employees should complete the screening prior to going into work, for every work shift. Learn more about the City’s screening protocols [here](#).

Face covering guidance

Research shows that face coverings could block COVID-19 from spreading when someone with the infection coughs, sneezes, or speaks, particularly among asymptomatic people. Transmission between asymptomatic people is one of the key factors behind the surge in cases in our region. Wearing a face covering protects you and those around you.

The City of Seattle requires employees, contractors, vendors, and visitors of City facilities to wear a face covering while at work, both indoors and outdoors, with some exceptions. This policy is intended to protect our City workforce and the public we serve. View the City's face covering guidance [here](#).

COVID-19 scenarios and required protocols

Outlined below are City of Seattle workplace protocols for two COVID-19 scenarios – all which require isolation or quarantine. If symptomatic, the employee may use their own accrued leave during their absence, and may be entitled to use other leaves, such as donated sick leave or FMLA. Employees should contact their HR representative to discuss their leave options and any other questions.

If the employee no longer presents COVID-19 symptoms but has not completed their required isolation/quarantine, they should telework if they are able to do so while completing their isolation/quarantine.

First responders and certain essential staff may be operating under different work site/operational protocols. Please contact your designated human resources representative for more information.

The two COVID-19 scenarios are:

1. An employee has COVID-19 symptoms, or tests positive for COVID-19 but does not have symptoms – isolation.
2. An employee has been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19 – quarantine (excluding people who have had COVID-19 or have been fully vaccinated against the disease in the past 3 months*).

*People who have tested positive for COVID-19, or have been fully vaccinated against the disease, do not need to quarantine or get tested for up to 3 months as long as they do not develop symptoms. People who develop symptoms within 3 months of their first bout of COVID-19, or full vaccine, may need to be tested if there is no other cause identified for their symptoms. Source: [CDC: When to quarantine](#).

Scenario One: An employee has COVID-19 symptoms, or tests positive for COVID-19 but does not have symptoms – isolation.

- **Isolation:**

The employee must immediately begin at-home isolation and next steps should be made in accordance with guidance from PHSKC and the employee's health care provider.

- If the employee has COVID-19 symptoms, they must remain under isolation until:
 - At least 10 days since symptoms first appeared, and
 - At least 24 hours with no fever (without fever-reducing medication), and
 - Other symptoms of COVID-19 are improving. Note that loss of taste and smell may persist for weeks or months after recovery and need not delay the end of isolation.
 - Source: CDC guidance for: [for people who have COVID-19](#).
- If the employee tested positive for COVID-19 but has no symptoms, they must remain under isolation until:
 - 10 days have passed since their positive test

- If the employee develops symptoms after testing positive, they must follow the guidance above for “employee has COVID-19 symptoms”.
- **Notification:**

If an employee has COVID-19 symptoms, or tests positive for COVID-19 but does not have symptoms, the employee must not report to the workplace. In addition:

 - The employee should notify their manager they will not be at work but does not need to provide specific details about their underlying medical condition.
 - If the employee’s work location is outside of their home, the employee must immediately notify SDHR of their diagnosis as a public health precaution by emailing SDHRCOVID@seattle.gov.
 - Teleworking employees who have no contact with other workers or the public may choose to notify SDHR of their diagnosis at SDHRCOVID@seattle.gov to inform City-wide data tracking and operations.
 - If you are unsure of how to care for yourself or are concerned about your condition, call your health care provider for advice. If you feel you need to visit your doctor, call them first. If you do not have a healthcare provider, call the King County COVID-19 call center between 8 AM – 7 PM PST at 206-477-3977.
- **Testing Protocol:**
 - If the employee has COVID-19 symptoms and has not been tested, it is recommended that they be tested as soon as possible. Testing is free at any of the [County and City COVID-19 testing locations](#).
 - If the employee’s **test result is positive**, they must continue to follow all guidance outlined in this scenario.
 - If the employee’s **test result is negative**:
 - If they previously notified their manager or SDHRCOVID@seattle.gov that they had symptoms, then they should notify SDHR of their negative test result at SDHRCOVID@seattle.gov to inform City-wide data tracking and operations.
 - They should quarantine for 10 days if no symptoms. Or, for 7 days if they receive a negative test result that was collected on Day 5. Source: PHSKC guidance for: [if your test is negative](#).
 - Employees wishing to return to their work sites must provide documentation of their negative test showing the date and results of the test to their HR representative, or to SDHRCOVID@seattle.gov. It will be retained as confidential information by HR, and HR will notify the employee’s manager that the employee is able to return to their work site.
 - If the employee was teleworking and had no contact with others before the onset of symptoms, then the employee is not required to notify SDHR of their test result.
 - If the employee has recovered from their symptoms after testing positive for COVID-19, they may continue to test positive for three months or more without being contagious to others. For this reason, they should be tested again only if they develop new symptoms of possible COVID-19. Getting tested again should be discussed with their healthcare provider, especially if they have been in close contact with another person who has tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 14 days. Source: CDC guidance for: [getting tested again for COVID-19](#).

- If the employee does not get tested, they should continue to follow all guidance outlined in this scenario.
- **Compensation:**
 - If the employee is well enough to continue performing their job from home, the employee should telework if they are able to do so.
 - If the employee is too sick to telework or cannot perform their job from home, the employee may use applicable leave during their absence, and may be entitled to use other leaves, such as donated sick leave, or FMLA. Employees should contact their HR representative to discuss their leave options and any other questions.
 - Once the employee's symptoms clear, they should resume telework, if they are able to do so, for their remaining at-home isolation.
- **Workplace Protocol:**
 - SDHR will immediately work with the employee and applicable departments' Human Resources units to identify and notify those in the workplace who may have been exposed to the virus based on close contact with the individual.
 - SDHR will evaluate potential exposure and make appropriate notifications beyond those who may have had close contact with the individual.
 - The employee's identity and confidentiality will be protected during notifications, and the specifics of the employee's health status will not be disclosed. Personal health information will be kept confidential and not disclosed except on a need-to-know basis.
- **Cleaning:**
 - The department and SDHR should immediately coordinate with Finance and Administrative Services (FAS) to secure an enhanced cleaning of the employee's workspace.
 - SDHR will work with the employee and applicable Human Resources units to determine whether further enhanced cleaning is necessary. FAS' enhanced cleaning protocol can be found [here](#).

Scenario Two: An employee has been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19 – quarantine (excluding people who have had COVID-19 or have been fully vaccinated against the disease in the past 3 months*).

The CDC defines [close contact](#) as follows:

- You were within 6 feet of someone who has COVID-19 for a total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period;
- You provided care at home to someone who is sick with COVID-19;
- You had direct physical contact with the person (hugged or kissed them);
- You shared eating or drinking utensils; and
- They sneezed, coughed, or somehow got respiratory droplets on you

*People who have tested positive for COVID-19, or have been fully vaccinated against the disease, do not need to quarantine or get tested for up to 3 months as long as they do not develop symptoms.. People who develop symptoms within 3 months of their first bout of COVID-19, or full vaccine, may need to be tested if there is no other cause identified for their symptoms. Source: [CDC: When to quarantine](#).

- **Quarantine:**

- The employee must immediately begin at-home quarantine and next steps should be made in accordance with guidance from Public Health – Seattle and King County (PHSKC) and the employee’s health care provider. The CDC and PHSKC recommend that the safest option is to remain in quarantine for a period of 14 days, from the date the employee had their last contact with the individual who has COVID-19. However, the following options to shorten quarantine are acceptable alternatives if it is not possible to quarantine for 14 days:
 - Quarantine can end after Day 10 without testing so long as the employee has experienced no [symptoms](#) during daily monitoring.
 - If it is not possible to quarantine for 10 or 14 days, quarantine can end after Day 7 if the employee has a COVID-19 test result that is negative, and the employee has experienced no [symptoms](#) during daily monitoring. The test should be taken within 48 hours before the end of the planned quarantine period, i.e., the negative test result was collected on Day 5. However, quarantine cannot be discontinued earlier than after Day 7 (Source: PHSKC guidance for: [if your test is negative](#)). If ending quarantine after Day 7 or Day 10:
 - Employees wishing to return to their work sites must provide documentation of their negative test showing the date and results of the test to their HR representative, or to SDHRCOVID@seattle.gov. It will be retained as confidential information by HR, and HR will notify the employee’s manager that the employee is able to return to their work site.
 - If the employee is teleworking, documentation of negative test is not required to continue teleworking.
 - Daily symptom monitoring and masking, frequent handwashing, and social distancing should continue even after the quarantine has ended. If any symptoms develop, the employee should immediately self-isolate and follow all guidance outlined in Scenario One.
 - Source: CDC guidance: [Options to reduce quarantine for contacts of persons with COVID-19 using symptom monitoring and testing](#), and SKCPH guidance: [King County following new CDC quarantine guidelines](#)
- **Notification:**
 - If an employee has been in close contact as defined above, the employee must not report to the workplace.
 - The employee should immediately notify their manager they will not be at work, but the employee does not need to provide specific details about their underlying medical condition.
 - If the employee’s work location is outside of their home, the employee must immediately notify SDHR of their close contact as a public health precaution by emailing SDHRCOVID@seattle.gov.
 - Teleworking employees who have no contact with other workers or the public may choose to notify SDHR of their close contact at SDHRCOVID@seattle.gov to inform City-wide data tracking and operations.
 - If you are unsure of how to care for yourself or are concerned about your condition, call your health care provider for advice. If you feel you need to visit your doctor, call them first. If you do not have a healthcare provider, call the King County COVID-19 call center between 8 AM – 7 PM PST at 206-477-3977.

- **Testing Protocol:**
 - It is recommended that the employee gets tested for COVID-19. Testing is free at any of the [County and City COVID-19 testing locations](#).
 - If the employee's test result is **positive and they develop COVID-19 symptoms**, they must follow all guidance outlined in Scenario One.
 - If the employee's test result is **positive but they do not have symptoms**, they must follow all guidance outlined in Scenario One.
 - If the employee's test result is **negative**, they must notify SDHR of their test result at SDHRCOVID@seattle.gov before the employee physically returns to the workplace, and continue to follow all guidance outlined in this scenario for "if your test is negative".
 - Teleworking employees who are not physically reporting to work outside their homes may choose to inform SDHR of their test result for City-wide data tracking and operations.
 - If the employee does not get tested for COVID-19, they should continue to follow all guidance outlined in this scenario.
- **Compensation:**
 - If the employee is well enough to continue performing their job from home, the employee should telework if they are able to do so.
 - If the employee is too sick to telework, needs to care for a sick family member, or cannot perform their job from home, the employee may use applicable leave during their absence, and may be entitled to use other leaves, such as donated sick leave or FMLA. Employees should contact their HR representative to discuss their leave options and any other questions.
 - Once the employee's symptoms clear, they may resume telework if they are able to do so, for their remaining at-home quarantine.
- **Cleaning:**
 - The department and SDHR should immediately coordinate with Finance and Administrative Services (FAS) to determine the need for an enhanced cleaning of the employee's workspace.
 - SDHR will work with the employee and applicable Human Resources units to determine whether further enhanced cleaning is necessary. FAS' enhanced cleaning protocol can be found [here](#).