



What happens when an employee is diagnosed with COVID-19 in Walla Walla County?

Walla Walla County Department of Community Health (DCH) conducts an interview with all people newly confirmed with a positive COVID-19 test result. This interview includes gathering information on demographics, symptoms, health and wellness history, employment or student status, exposure probability and timeline, close contacts and locations over past 14 days. Names and phone numbers for people who were in close contact are provided so our team can reach out to those close contacts to discuss the 14-day quarantine, provide helpful information on resources, healthcare referral, and symptoms to watch for over the next 2 weeks. A close contact is someone within 6 feet of positive COVID-19 case for more than 15 minutes.

People diagnosed with COVID-19 are encouraged to inform their employer and close contacts right away to bring awareness which can minimize the spread of COVID-19. Employers can immediately alert patrons and coworkers of the possible exposure and refer them to DCH COVID-19 helpline 509-524-2647 for guidance. Employers should cordon off the positive employee's workspace for a deep cleaning followed by sanitizing and disinfection, [Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility | CDC](#).

DCH will contact employers to follow-up on close contacts, cleaning and disinfection processes and COVID-19 safety plans as well as answer any questions. Employers can contact DCH COVID-19 helpline for guidance and support at 509-524-2647.

Here are steps to take if your business has staff diagnosed with COVID-19:

Tell your employees to take the following steps if they experience [COVID-19 symptoms](#), especially fever, cough or shortness of breath:

- **Isolate immediately.** If an employee is experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, they should isolate themselves immediately from others, leave the workplace and stay home to reduce the risk of spreading the infection. Employees should call in to report illness and not go in to work.
- **Seek testing.** If you have even mild symptoms or have had close contact with a person who has COVID-19, get tested. [Here is info on local testing sites.](#)
- **Stay home.** Don't return to work or go out into the public until you feel healthy, where you have gone three straight days without a fever without the use of any fever reducing medications and improving respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath) and at least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.

Get medical care. Seek advice from your doctor [on what to do if you are sick](#). If you don't have a doctor, call the Walla Walla County COVID-19 help line 509-524-2647.

Reporting cases and protecting employees' privacy

At this time, most employers are not required to report individual COVID-19 cases to the DCH. DCH will be informed via the healthcare provider that conducted the employee's COVID-19 test. However, DCH is available to consult or support efforts to minimize spread in the workplace. Call to speak with the COVID-19 clinical staff at 509-524-2647.

It is REQUIRED to report cases to Department of Community Health when:

- In healthcare and social service settings (e.g., senior living communities, homeless shelters, child care programs) should report cases to DCH, while maintaining the confidentiality of anyone who is sick.
- In non-healthcare or social services setting, employer is aware of 2 or more employees who develop confirmed or suspected COVID-19 or suspects the virus may be spreading through the workplace, please contact Community



Health 509-524-2647. If an employee has been diagnosed with COVID-19 and may have been in close contact with other employees while infectious, notify other employees they may have been exposed, **but do not identify the person who is sick.**

Cleaning and disinfection

In most cases, you do not need to shut down your facility. If it has been less than 7 days since the sick employee has been in the facility, close off any areas used for prolonged periods of time by the sick person:

- Wait 24 hours from the last time the employee was in the facility before cleaning and disinfecting to minimize potential exposure for other employees. If waiting 24 hours is not feasible, wait as long as possible.
- During this waiting period, open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in these areas.
- Follow the CDC [cleaning and disinfection recommendations](#).

If it has been 7 days or more since the sick employee used the facility, additional cleaning and disinfection is not necessary. Continue routinely cleaning and disinfecting all high-touch surfaces in the facility.

Maintain healthy business operations

- **Develop a COVID-19 Safety Plan and appoint a COVID-19 supervisor** to trace cases in the workforce and alert anyone who may have been exposed. The supervisor should help employees who have tested positive trace their contacts with coworkers. This will help DCH contact tracing team who will follow-up with anyone identified as a close contact. The supervisor should also prepare resources to assist workers who need guidance about how to [isolate or quarantine](#) at home. The supervisor must maintain the privacy of employees' protected health information.
- **Establish flexible sick leave policies and practices that are flexible and supportive**, especially for workers 60 or older or those with [underlying health conditions](#) that make them especially vulnerable to the virus. When sick employees can stay home, it prevents the spread to others at work.
- **Do not require a doctor's note** from any employees with symptoms of COVID-19.
- **Communicate supportive workplace policies**, such as telework options, employee assistance programs, alternatives to public-facing duties, in the preferred language of employees.
- **Establish social distancing policies** and practices such as daily COVID-19 screening at the start of each shift.

Please review employee health policies and procedures with staff. Employee health policies should prohibit workers from working while sick.

The following are links to Department of Health's handouts as well as resources for Food Service businesses for Safe Start Reopening.

- [What to do if you have confirmed or suspected coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [What to do if you were potentially exposed to someone with confirmed coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [What to do if you have symptoms of coronavirus disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) and have not been around anyone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19](#)
- [Safe Start COVID-19 Business Plan](#)
- [Reopening Guidance and Requirements for Businesses and Workers](#)