

CDC Shortens COVID-19 Related Isolation and Quarantine Period, and Distinguishes Between Vaccinated Individuals With/Without Booster

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On December 27, 2021, the CDC issued updated guidance which significantly shortens the periods of isolation and quarantine it recommends for COVID-related diagnosis and/or exposure.

Specifically, the CDC now recommends that individuals who **test positive** for COVID-19 (regardless of vaccination status) isolate for only 5 days, provided that they are asymptomatic and then wear a mask when around others for 5 days. The CDC previously had recommended 10 days of isolation.

The CDC recommends that individuals who have received a booster shot or completed the primary series of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine within six months prior to exposure (or the J&J vaccine within two months prior to exposure) wear a mask around others for 10 days after they have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 so long as they are asymptomatic and, if possible, test for COVID-19 on the fifth day after the exposure. If such individual develops symptoms, then they should quarantine and obtain a test.

In addition, the CDC now recommends that unvaccinated individuals who were exposed to COVID-19 but are asymptomatic: test for COVID-19 on the fifth day after exposure; quarantine for five days after exposure; and, after quarantine, wear a mask when around others for five days. The foregoing applies to individuals who received their last dose of the Moderna or Pfizer vaccine more than six months prior to the exposure (or received their dose of the J&J vaccine more than two months prior to the exposure) and have not yet received a booster shot.



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In applying the same standards to both (a) unvaccinated individuals; and (b) individuals who have not received a booster within 6/2 months after their primary vaccine, the CDC is essentially requiring individuals to receive booster shots in order to be considered fully vaccinated. This may foreshadow changes to the CDC's definition of "fully vaccinated" which, in turn, could have implications for employers' policies and recordkeeping requirements.

The CDC also provided that unvaccinated individuals/individuals who have not received a booster may chose not to quarantine so long as they are asymptomatic and wear a mask for 10 days after exposure.

To the extent state and/or local Department of Public Health agencies recommend longer periods of isolation and/or quarantine, employers would be well-advised to follow the more conservative guidance. As always, employees who have been diagnosed with or exposed to COVID-19 should consult with their healthcare provider and follow their provider's recommendations.

If you have any questions about the new guidance and/or any COVID-19 related policies or situations, please do not hesitate to reach out.