

Options to Reduce Quarantine

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released revised guidelines on December 2, 2020 outlining a change in quarantine recommendations. The new guidance states that some people who have been exposed to COVID-19 may now quarantine for less than two weeks. The change in guidance is due to a better understanding of the virus contagion period.

Reducing the length of quarantine may make it easier for people to quarantine by reducing the time they cannot work. A shorter quarantine period also can lessen stress on the public health system, especially when new infections are rapidly rising.

Your local public health authorities make the final decisions about how long quarantine should last, based on local conditions and needs. Follow the recommendations of your local public health department if you need to quarantine. Options they will consider include stopping quarantine:

- After day 10 without testing - **Quarantine can end after 10 days without testing and if no symptoms** have been reported during daily monitoring.
- **After day 7 after receiving a negative test result (test must occur on day 5 or later)** - If testing is available, then quarantine can end after 7 days if a respiratory specimen tests negative and no symptoms were experienced. The specimen may be collected and tested within 48 hours before the time of planned quarantine discontinuation, but quarantine cannot be discontinued earlier than after day 7. This means **testing should be initiated no earlier than 5 days after the close contact exposure occurs.**

In either scenario, continued symptom monitoring and masking through 14 days must continue. The CDC recognizes that any quarantine shorter than 14 days balances reduced burden against a small possibility of spreading the virus. **Anyone who contracts the disease should self-isolate until at least 10 days after symptoms begin, and not leave isolation until their fever is gone for at least 24 hours without the benefit of fever-reducing drugs.** In addition, all symptoms must be stable or improving and there cannot be any new symptoms.

After stopping quarantine, you should

- Watch for symptoms until 14 days after exposure.
- If you have symptoms, immediately self-isolate and contact your local public health authority or healthcare provider.
- Wear a mask, stay at least 6 feet from others, wash your hands, avoid crowds, and take other steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Lastly, all employees should familiarize themselves with DRTC protocols and ensure they comply with the following:

- Follow all DRTC protocols and complete necessary agency forms
- Keep your supervisor informed
- Communicate with HR prior to returning to work