

CDC Modifies COVID-19 Isolation and Quarantine Duration

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On Monday, December 27, 2021, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (“CDC”) issued updated guidance which reduced quarantine and isolation restrictions for Americans. The CDC refers to “isolation” as guidance for individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19, while the term “quarantine” is used for individuals who have been directly exposed to someone who tested positive for COVID-19.

For those individuals that have tested positive for COVID-19, the updated CDC guidance reduces the isolation time from 10 days to 5 days, as long as the person is asymptomatic after the 5th day. The individual should continue to wear a mask in public or around others for 5 days after the isolation ends. The 5-day isolation period applies regardless of vaccination status but, importantly, only applies when the person is asymptomatic.

The CDC also issued updated guidance with respect to quarantines. The CDC recommendations about quarantines are dependent on each person’s vaccination status. For anyone who has received a booster, or received their second Pfizer or Moderna vaccine within the last 6 months, or has received the J & J vaccine within the last 2 months, no quarantine is required. However, the CDC recommends that anyone who has received the vaccine as previously described wear a mask for 10 days and take a test after day 5, if possible.

For anyone who is unvaccinated, received their second Pfizer or Moderna vaccine over 6 months ago and is not boosted, or received the J&J vaccine over 2 months ago and is not boosted, the CDC recommends that if they are exposed to someone with COVID-19, they quarantine for 5 days after the exposure. Following the 5-day quarantine, they should take a test if possible and assuming there are no symptoms, should wear a mask in public or around others for the 5 days following the quarantine.

We recommended that employers review all applicable policies and contact labor counsel to determine whether policies should be updated to reflect the reduced isolation and quarantine time. The current surge of cases is expected to continue into early 2022 and employers will see more and more employees test positive or indicate exposure to people who test positive. Employers should determine whether updating their COVID policies to reflect these shortened quarantine and isolation periods makes sense for their employees and their workplaces, as following the CDC guidance may permit employees to return to the office sooner after a COVID-19 diagnosis or exposure, provided they remain asymptomatic.