



RETURNING TO WORK DURING COVID-19 TESTING & EVALUATION OPTIONS

As COVID-19 restrictions begin to lift, employers are pivoting from surviving the pandemic to existing during the pandemic. As employees are being allowed to return to work, companies are tasked with determining the best ways to ensure a safe and effective work environment. The information around the virus is ever evolving which makes determining best practices more challenging than issues of past, but there are some testing and evaluation options that have come to the forefront.

TESTING

PCR (POLYMERASE CHAIN REACTION) TESTING

PURPOSE	Detects current virus infection of COVID-19
PROCEDURE	Nasal swab Results are either (+) or (-)
FREQUENCY	Daily for every employee entering the workplace
PROS	Used to diagnose current infection Indicates infection status which allows companies to take actions and prevent transmission May be positive 1-2 days before symptoms
CONS	Only available in CLIA certified labs* <i>(*CLIA: FDA/CMS/CDC related certification, typically hospital-based labs)</i> False negatives Turnaround time typically longer than other tests

ANTIBODY TESTING

PURPOSE	Detects human antibodies due to past infection of COVID-19
PROCEDURE	Blood draw or finger stick Results based on IgM and IgG (+) or (-)
FREQUENCY	Daily for every employee entering the workplace
PROS	Detect those with past exposure
CONS	Limited test availability Antibody detection may be delayed 7-11 days May not infer true immunity Does not detect current COVID-19 infections, so additional test may be needed

EVALUATION

TEMPERATURE TESTING	
PURPOSE	Detect high-risk individuals
SUPPLIES	Infrared thermometer, PPE, disinfectant wipes
FREQUENCY	Daily for every employee entering the workplace
PROS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can identify members as high-risk of having acute COVID-19 infection CDC approved procedures Safe for staff/testers Keeps most high-risk members out of facilities Identifies those in need of further evaluation Streamlines return to work process
CONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not identify asymptomatic COVID-19 positive individuals Can be costly depending on duration of testing needs Numerous considerations if employer facilitates the tests

KIOSKS	
PURPOSE	Detect high-risk individuals
PROCEDURE	Stand in front of kiosk to take body temperature
SUPPLIES	Desk stand/wall mount/floor standing kiosk
FREQUENCY	Daily for every employee entering the workplace
PROS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May be more cost effective than hiring a vendor or asking HR to take onsite temperatures No contact & fully automated Detects body temperature in ~1 second Displays a successful message or warning with traffic light style LED lights Built-in speakers provide verbal alerts including warnings for abnormal temperatures Employer can decide acceptable temperature threshold
CONS	Employers must determine follow-up requirements depending on results

QUESTIONNAIRE	
PURPOSE	Assesses potential COVID-19 exposure
PROCEDURE	Employee completes a series of questions online or on paper
SUPPLIES	Paper/tablet, pens, clipboards, PPE, disinfectant wipes
FREQUENCY	Daily for every employee entering the workplace
PROS	Learn if employees have an increased COVID-19 exposure potential Easy to administer
CONS	Concerns with validity (employees may not know certain answers or may feel inclined to lie) Employers need to determine follow-up requirements depending on questionnaire results

CONTACT TRACING	
PURPOSE	To prevent further spread of COVID-19 by determining employees with suspected or confirmed infection
PROCEDURE	Work with employees to help them recall everyone with whom they had close contact during the timeframe while they may have been infectious Staff quickly warn these exposed individuals of their potential exposure Contacts are provided information on what to do next
FREQUENCY	As soon as possible after employee tests positive for COVID-19
PROS	May prevent further spread of COVID-19 May encourage self-isolation of potentially exposed individuals
CONS	Can be challenging for employees to recall all potential contacts Skilled professionals need to facilitate contact tracing High cost may not outweigh the benefit



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