

COVID-19

As companies prepare for employees to begin returning to offices, after shelter-in-place orders have lifted, there are many important considerations for employers to ensure a healthy and safe environment for their employees. Many employers are considering implementing some form of COVID-19 testing; however, there is much confusion surrounding when and if certain types of tests and screenings are effective. One way to understand the types of COVID-19 testing available is to view the tests along a timeline.

While a timeline like this may help contextualize when specific COVID-19 tests would be helpful, making the decision when, if and what to test, is part of a larger conversation every organization needs to have, as part of their prepare plan.

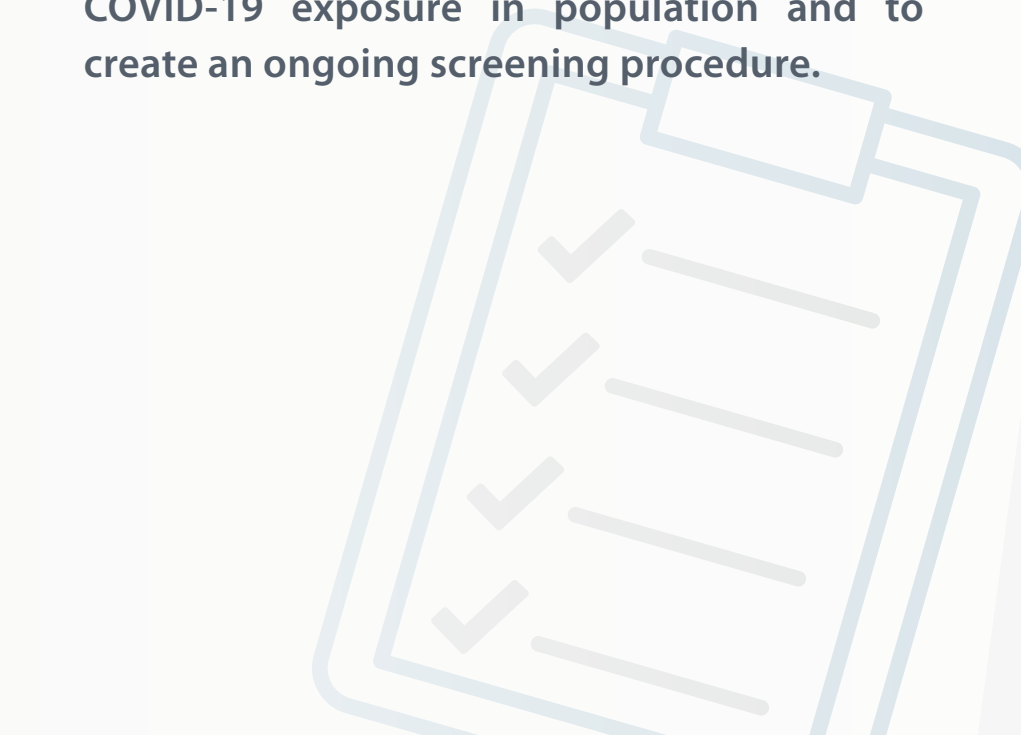
RETURN TO WORK CONSIDERATIONS:

- Employers who are considering implementing testing as part of a screening procedure should be aware that people may be infected by COVID-19 but may be asymptomatic, so employers must be prepared to administer these tests consistently on every employee that enters the workplace.
- Testing fees will fall outside of the health plan and additional expenses may apply for staffing and courier fees to take test results to the lab.
- Not all tests are FDA approved, and some are restricted for healthcare professionals only which may make them hard to come by.
- Some believe that the antibody tests provide more value, as there is no vaccine yet, and these are thought to potentially prove immunity. However, we still don't know if the IgG (long-term) antibodies offer immunity, so future PCR tests may still be necessary for some individuals to understand if they're still infected or contagious.
- Companies will need to follow their state's unique guidelines and recommendations, review the CDC's guidelines and should consult with legal counsel before making any "return to work" decisions.

DAY (-14 – -7)

BEFORE EMPLOYEES RETURN TO WORK

Implement questionnaire for returning employees to start assessing potential COVID-19 exposure in population and to create an ongoing screening procedure.



DAY (0 – 3)

THE ONSET OF SYMPTOMS IN EMPLOYEES

Over the first three days, the individual will typically develop the fever, body aches and/or cough.

PCR testing, or the nose swab, can show a positive test 1-2 days before the onset of symptoms.

1. An accurate PCR test can prove to be valuable if employers time the test appropriately to "catch" an employee that isn't exhibiting symptoms yet.

Current PCR tests have a sensitivity of 85-93%. Depending on how many people have the disease, and at what stage of illness they are being tested, any available test could potentially miss at least 10% of cases and up to 30% + of positive patients¹.

2. For maximum effectiveness, the test would need to be administered consistently on every employee that enter the workplace to eliminate those who may be infected but asymptomatic.

PCR tests can be \$100+ per person, so this may be an expensive option.

3. Due to potential variability in viral loads, a negative test result from a sample does not necessarily rule out the disease².

1. <https://www.healthline.com/health-news/false-negatives-covid19-tests-symptoms-assume-you-have-illness>
2. <https://www.centerforhealthsecurity.org/resources/COVID-19/serology/Serology-based-tests-for-COVID-19.html>

Since a fever is a common symptom of COVID-19, temperature testing is one option to understand if an employee is infected.

1. Not all individuals with COVID-19 experience a high fever, so this isn't a failsafe solution.

2. In-Person Temperature Testing: Temperature testing may be an affordable option (most vendors charge \$75-\$90 per hour per staff member, plus travel), but every employee will need to be tested every day before they can enter the building or campus.

3. Kiosks: These can be placed at every entrance to the building. This may be the most affordable option as the cost is around \$2,000 per unit; however, it depends on the total number of locations or building entrances.

DAY 7

ONGOING SYMPTOMS AND TESTING MANAGEMENT

Antibody Blood Tests: For a positive COVID-19 case, the IgM blood test would show short-term antibodies, that would be positive. If someone is positive for IgM they may still be in the early stage of infection.

1. People may be infected by COVID-19 but can be asymptomatic. If an employer is considering administering these tests, they must recognize that for maximum effectiveness, the test would need to be administered consistently on every employee that enters the workplace.

Antibody tests can be \$70+ per person, so this may become an expensive option.

DAY 14

NEXT STEPS AFTER TESTING

For a positive COVID-19 case, the IgG blood test would show long-term antibodies that would be positive.

Typically in around the same timeframe, the virus is no longer in the nose, resulting in a negative PCR nose swab test, meaning they could have recovered from COVID-19. However, the PCR result would be the same whether the person had COVID-19 and recovered or if they never had it.

During these incredibly challenging times, no organization wants to be accused of doing too much or too little. If an organization has been successfully working remotely over the past few months, companies may consider keeping these employees at home for a bit longer (or at least actively encouraging it).



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