

Guidance for Managing COVID-19 Exposure

Background

The County continues to provide information, updates and guidance to ensure a collaborative approach toward maintaining County operations while protecting the health and safety of employees and the public. It is important we remain alert to the changing scenarios presented by COVID-19 and be ready to adapt our Orange County Government practices quickly.

People with a COVID-19 infection, whether vaccinated or not, can spread the virus through their respiratory secretions, especially when they cough or sneeze. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the virus is likely spread from person-to-person when there is [close contact](#) and **prolonged exposure** with someone who has **COVID-19 symptoms**. It is reasonable to define prolonged exposure as **any exposure greater than 15 minutes**. According to the CDC, among the [symptoms associated with COVID-19](#) are **fever of 100.4 degrees or greater, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, diarrhea, new loss of taste or smell, muscle or body aches, headache, nausea or vomiting, sore throat, and congestion or runny nose**. The County will assume that individuals with these symptoms have COVID-19.

COVID-19 Vaccinations

According to the CDC, COVID-19 vaccines are [safe and effective](#) and although individuals may experience side effects after vaccination, these are normal signs that the body is building protection. If an employee received a COVID-19 vaccine in the last 1-3 days, including a booster vaccine, the following symptoms may be caused by the vaccine or illness: **fever, fatigue, headache, chills, muscle and body aches**. The CDC recommends anyone with a fever should be excluded from work, except those with “normal” post vaccination symptoms.

The vaccination does not cause: **cough, shortness of breath, runny nose/congestion, sore throat, loss of taste or smell**. Employees with these symptoms should be quarantined per the usual pathway indicated below based on exposure risk for COVID-19. It is also recommended that they be evaluated by their personal healthcare provider.

Employees Who Received a Booster Shot

So far, reactions reported after getting a [booster shot](#) were similar to those after the two-dose or single-dose primary series. Fever, headache, fatigue and pain at the injection site were the most commonly reported side effects, and overall, most side effects were mild to moderate. However, as with the two-dose or single-dose primary series, [serious side effects are rare](#), but may occur.

Fully Vaccinated vs. Unvaccinated

It typically takes two weeks for an individual who has been fully vaccinated to build protection (immunity) against the virus that causes COVID-19. People are considered [fully vaccinated](#):

- 2 weeks after their second dose in a 2-dose series, such as the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines, or
- 2 weeks after a single-dose vaccine, such as Johnson & Johnson’s Janssen (J & J) vaccine.

Individuals who do not meet these requirements are considered *unvaccinated*. They should keep taking all [precautions](#) until fully vaccinated.

For more information visit the [CDC's Vaccines for COVID-19 webpage](#). Employees who are fully vaccinated should continue to exercise the following safety measures while at work:

- Adhere to the County's workplace safety policy and current CDC guidelines
- Take precautions in public like wearing a well-fitted mask, which covers the nose and mouth, and physical distancing
- Get tested if experiencing [COVID-19 symptoms and notify your supervisor](#)

COVID-19 Exposure Risk

In our work environments, the risk of exposure to the virus may vary depending on the employee's requirement to perform tasks within close contact of individuals known to be, or suspected of being, infected with COVID-19. For purposes of identifying employees who may be at potential risk, job tasks may be broken into the following categories:

High Exposure Risk

Staff performing tasks at this level are at the **highest risk of prolonged exposure** with individuals who are known or suspected COVID-19 patients. Examples include healthcare service delivery staff; first responders and medical transport staff; law enforcement, and staff providing care and custody of inmates.

Medium Exposure Risk

Staff performing tasks that put them in **close and frequent contact** with each other and the general public. Many County positions fall into this category and are at **moderate risk of exposure** with individuals known to be, or suspected of being, infected with COVID-19.

Lower Exposure Risk

Staff performing tasks with minimal and **infrequent direct contact** with each other or the public. Many County positions fall into this category and are at **least risk of exposure** with individuals known to be, or suspected of being, infected with COVID-19.

Note: It is important every possible precaution be taken to minimize everyone's risk of exposure to COVID-19. Currently, employees at all the above risk levels continue to work and deliver essential County services. You are encouraged to further minimize potential risk by **re-evaluating your staff's work and re-assigning as many employees as possible to work from home**.

COVID-19 Exposure Questionnaire

When notified by your employees of a potential exposure, please have them complete the [COVID-19 Exposure Questionnaire](#). The questionnaire is intended to assist you in determining when employees may work from home, continue to work at their usual location with protective gear (and monitor conditions), or when self-quarantine or self-isolation at home is required.

Consistent with [CDC contact tracing guidelines](#), the County may need to gather as much information as possible from the impacted employee to help identify everyone with whom they may have had close contact (for at least 15 minutes) during the time when they may have been infectious. Then work to notify other staff members (contacts) identified by the positive employee as soon as possible about their potential exposure to "a positive case" in the workplace, and request they self-quarantine, as applicable, in accordance with the exposure guidance below.

COVID-19 Positive/Exposure Status

The below guidance applies to all risk level employees (Low, Medium and High)

Positive COVID-19 Result (*whether vaccinated or not*)

- **Quarantine/Isolation Status:** Employees with a positive COVID-19 test must isolate (vaccinated or unvaccinated) for 5 calendar days and if asymptomatic or symptoms are resolving (without fever for 24 hours), followed by 5 additional calendar days of wearing a face covering when around others to minimize the risk of infecting people they encounter. A face covering is required at all times while in the workplace.
- **Returning to work (onsite) Status:** Employees may return to onsite work when released by their healthcare provider *or* after 5 calendar days from the onset of symptoms (or if no symptoms, from date of positive test), and if asymptomatic or symptoms are resolving (without fever for 24 hours).
- **Work from home/Leave Status:** Employees may be authorized by management to work from home. Employees who are unable to “effectively” work from home, may utilize their applicable leave balances (term, sick, personal, vacation, etc.).

COVID-19 Exposure Only (*close contact with someone who is positive*):

❖ **Category I**

If employee:

- Received his/her booster

OR

Completed the primary series of Pfizer or Moderna vaccine within the last 6 months

OR

Completed the primary series of J & J vaccine within the last 2 months

- **Quarantine/Isolation Status:** Employees in this category do not have to quarantine, as long as they do not have any symptoms. Employees must wear an approved face covering when around others for 10 days. Additionally, employees should test on calendar day 5 after exposure, if possible. If symptoms later develop, employee should stay home.
- **Returning to work (onsite) Status:** Work onsite as normal as long as no symptoms exist.

❖ **Category II**

If employee:

Completed the primary series of Pfizer or Moderna vaccine over 6 months ago and are not boosted

OR

Completed the primary series of J & J over 2 months ago and are not boosted

OR

Is unvaccinated

- **Quarantine/Isolation Status:** Employees in this category must quarantine at home for 5 calendar days from the date of exposure followed by 5 additional calendar days of wearing a face covering when around

others to minimize the risk of infecting people they encounter. A face covering is required at all times while in the workplace.

- **Returning to work (onsite) Status:** Employees may return to onsite work when released by their healthcare provider *or* after 5 calendar days from the date of exposure. If employees develop symptoms, employee should stay home. Note: Public Safety employees may work as normal with approved face covering.
- **Work from home/Leave Status:** Employees may be authorized by management to work from home. Employees who are unable to “effectively” work from home, may utilize applicable leave (term, sick, personal, vacation, etc.) while out. Note: Public Safety employees may work as normal with approved face covering.

Note to Department Directors: It is important to maintain consistency in our response; therefore, it is recommended unique concerns regarding these guidelines be escalated to your respective Deputy County Administrator.