

What Should You Do If Workers Exhibit Symptoms of COVID-19? – Quiz



Send workers with COVID-19 symptoms home, regardless of their vaccination status.

There's been some confusion about what employers should do when one of their employees exhibits symptoms of COVID-19. The last thing you want or need is to allow a potentially infected person roam about the workplace exposing everybody he comes across; by the same token, workers have privacy and other personal rights. Besides, just because they're symptomatic doesn't mean they actually have COVID-19. Working through the following scenario will test and bolster your understanding of the current rules for dealing with symptomatic workers.

SITUATION

Three of your workers are exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19: Andrea, who's been fully vaccinated for over 2 weeks; Brad, who just received his second dose of the vaccine a day earlier; and Chloe, who's totally unvaccinated.

QUESTION #1

Which, if any, of the workers should you send home? (Note: There may be more than one correct answer)

1. Andrea
2. Brad
3. Chloe

ANSWER

A., B., and C. You should send all 3 workers home.

EXPLANATION

Unless you're a healthcare provider or facility, you shouldn't allow anybody displaying COVID-19 symptoms into the workplace regardless of their vaccination status. While local public health guidelines vary slightly, the general rule is that employees you send home due to symptoms should stay home and not return until either their symptoms resolve or they test negative for COVID-19. And that

takes us to Questions 2 and 3.

QUESTION #2

Which symptomatic worker(s) should undergo COVID-19 testing'

1. Andrea
2. Brad
3. Chloe

ANSWER

1. Chloe

EXPLANATION

While anybody exhibiting symptoms should get tested for COVID-19, testing is especially imperative for the unvaccinated. So, you should strongly advise Chloe to get tested or speak to a doctor. Meanwhile, because she's unvaccinated, Chloe needs to go into self-isolation and you need to perform contact tracing and notify any person with whom Chloe has had close and prolonged contact at work of their own potential exposure.

Since Andrea's been vaccinated, she doesn't have to self-isolate. She can go home and simply ride it out and wait to see how things develop before deciding on testing. If her symptoms resolve, she can return; if they get worse, she should get tested. If things reach that point and she tests positive, you'd be required to notify individuals with whom she's had recent contact at work.

Brad's symptoms might very well be a normal reaction that many people exhibit within 1 to 3 days after getting the second dose of the vaccine. Like Andrea, he should stay home and wait for his symptoms to either resolve or worsen before deciding whether to get tested.

QUESTION #3

Which kind of testing should the workers experiencing COVID-19 symptoms get'

1. Rapid antigen testing
2. Molecular testing
3. Either of the above

ANSWER

1. People who are symptomatic should undergo molecular testing.

EXPLANATION

While both forms of testing are capable of detecting the virus that causes COVID-19, molecular testing is more accurate and reliable than antigen testing. The downside of molecular testing is that it generally must be performed by an off-site lab using specialized equipment. And that takes time. Rapid testing, by contrast, can be done quickly and at the point of care.

The accuracy-for-scalability trade off is acceptable for screening purposes. In

other words, a negative rapid test is considered reliable enough to allow people who don't have symptoms to pass screening. However, the accuracy of molecular testing is required for those exhibiting symptoms since the objective of testing is medical diagnosis rather than screening for a social setting.

Bottom Line: A negative rapid COVID-19 test result isn't enough to allow a symptomatic employee to return; only a negative molecular test result will do.