

Workplace COVID-19 Exposure Assessment Tool (9 September 2022)

This Guidance has been designed to help employers to conduct a risk assessment following a COVID-19 workplace exposure and to provide advice on related actions. This Guidance has been updated to include a separate table with advice for employers on the key considerations for employees diagnosed with COVID-19 to return to work following their 5-day isolation period.

The Workplace COVID-19 Exposure Assessment tool (table 2) should be used to inform a proportionate response to mitigate risk of COVID-19 transmission in the workplace. While the Assessment Tool is designed to be used when responding to an exposure in the workplace (that is, someone attending during the time that they may be infectious with COVID-19), it may also assist workplaces in their planning to decrease potential impacts of exposures if they occur.

Persons conducting a business or undertaking (employers) and workers, should be aware that additional work health safety obligations apply under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*. These work safety obligations apply independently of the advice in this Workplace Exposure Assessment Tool and must be complied with.

Table 1: Considerations for employers in return to work planning for employees who have completed a 5 day isolation period following a positive COVID-19 test

Return to work for employees who have completed a 5 day isolation period following a positive COVID-19 test	<p>People with COVID-19 are required to isolate for 5 days after their positive COVID-19 test, with day zero being the day of the positive test.</p> <p>It is recommended that a person who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 remains at home and minimises contact with other people until their symptoms are gone or they are feeling much better.</p> <p>Persons who have recovered from COVID-19 are also required to abide by additional measures for two days after their isolation period, as outlined in the Public Health (Diagnosed People and Household Contacts) Emergency Direction 2022, and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• wearing a face mask in indoor spaces other than in a person’s home, in accordance with the Public Health (Mandatory Face Masks) Emergency Direction 2022;• not entering high risk settings without prior approval from the relevant facility (unless for emergency medical care); and• Not working in a care facility, including an in-home and community aged care provider and a disability service provider, without prior approval from the employer. <p>Noting that a small proportion of persons with COVID-19 may continue to be infectious for more than 5 days from their positive COVID-19 test, workplaces are encouraged to consider any additional risks associated with employees returning to the workplace on days 6 and 7 following a positive COVID-19 test result, in line with work health and safety obligations. Considerations could include but are not limited to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Whether it is possible to support working from home arrangements, if the employee is well enough to work.• If working from home is not possible, ensure that an employee is feeling well, and their symptoms have gone, or they are feeling much better prior to returning to work.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the employee is wearing a face mask, in accordance with mask wearing requirements and any additional workplace policies. • Limit work to a single site or area where possible. If multiple work sites need to be visited in a day, consider whether additional risk mitigations are needed. • Whether staff can work in lower risk roles, where face to face contact is not necessary and where there is limited contact with large numbers of people. • Whether it is possible for staff to minimise time spent in indoor communal areas. • Continue to encourage all employees to comply with COVID Smart Behaviours like physical distancing, hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette.
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Table 2: Workplace COVID-19 Exposure Assessment Tool

Exposure Risk	Low risk	Moderate risk	High risk
Exposure	<p>The person had brief or distanced contact with a person with COVID-19 in their infectious period.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdoors for any length of time (with or without masks worn), or • Short contact in an indoor space with physical distancing not maintained and for less than 30 minutes, or • Physical distancing was maintained in a large, well ventilated, indoor space, or • Does not meet the criteria for high or moderate risk exposure. 	<p>The person spent some time with a person with COVID-19 in their infectious period.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct face to face contact or close interactions (within 1.5 metres) and for more than 30 minutes with masks worn, or • Physical distancing was maintained over a prolonged period (for example, up to 4 hours) in an indoor space and interaction does not fit the criteria for a high risk exposure. 	<p>The person spent a long time with a person with COVID-19 in their infectious period.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct face to face contact or close interactions (within 1.5 metres) for more than 30 minutes in an indoor space without masks being consistently worn, or • Prolonged time spent together in a small space (up to 20m²) for more than 4 hours without masks being consistently worn, or • Close interactions in a large space over one or more consecutive days without masks being consistently worn.

<p>Examples</p> <p><i>These examples only apply if the person with COVID-19 attended work during their infectious period (eg. 2 days before having symptoms, or two days before getting tested).</i></p> <p><i>If a worker falls into more than one exposure category, the employer should refer to the higher exposure.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For an office space, people who worked in surrounding pods (not in the same pod area) in an open plan office. A pod area may include a group of desks which are adjoined or directly adjacent to each other. • For other workplaces, people who worked in the same area but were in physically distanced work areas. • People who share toilet and kitchen facilities but have no other contact. • People who have had short contact in an indoor space for example, delivery drivers, brief conversations in corridors / tearooms / shop fronts, or shared a lift. • People who have spent time in a room with front facing, tiered seating with masks consistently worn (for example, a lecture theatre). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was in a small indoor room/s (up to 20m²) or in a confined space for more than 30 minutes but less than four hours with masks worn. • Worked for a whole day in the same open plan office (in same pod area) with masks worn. A pod area may include a group of desks which are adjoined or directly adjacent to each other. • Frequent brief interactions throughout the day in the same large room / retail / hospitality setting over one or more days with physical distancing maintained. • Spent the day together in a training session or large room with masks being consistently worn. • Worked at the same retail/service counter for more than 30 minutes with masks consistently worn. • Drove together with masks consistently worn. • Ate one meal together in an indoor space. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worked in the side pod areas (seated at a workstation) with frequent short close collaboration in the shared desk space over one or more consecutive days without masks being worn. • Spent time in small meeting room/s or another small indoor space (up to 20m²) for more than 4 hours in total. • Worked closely together doing physical work (for example, on a building site) over one or more consecutive days without masks being worn. • Ate several meals together in an indoor space. • Drove together for more than 30 minutes without masks being consistently worn. • Worked at the same retail/service counter for one or more days, interacting frequently, without masks being consistently worn.
<p>Action for exposed persons</p>	<p>People identified as low risk contacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should follow ACT Health Guidance for a low risk exposure (summary below). 	<p>People identified as moderate risk contacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should follow the ACT Health guidance for a moderate risk contact (summary below). 	<p>People identified as high risk contacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should follow the ACT Health guidance for a high risk contact, which recommends that a person follows the same advice as household contacts (summary below). • People with high risk exposures are not required to complete ACT Health's online declaration form.

Summary of ACT Health Guidance for each exposure category

Guidance is as follows (*please refer to link above for most current advice*):

- Monitor closely for symptoms of COVID-19.
- Get a COVID-19 test (PCR preferred) if symptoms develop and isolate until a negative result is received and symptoms resolve.
- If the person has symptoms and a negative RAT, a PCR test is recommended.
- Practice COVID Smart behaviours.

Guidance is as follows (*please refer to link above for most current advice*):

- Have a COVID-19 test as soon as possible.
- Employees do not need to quarantine while awaiting the result of their test if they do not have any symptoms but should minimise their movements in the community until they receive a negative result.
- Monitor closely for COVID-19 symptoms for the 14 days following the exposure.
- Get a COVID-19 test (PCR preferred) if symptoms develop and isolate until a negative result is received and symptoms resolve.
- If the person has symptoms and a negative RAT, a PCR test is recommended.
- Practice COVID Smart behaviours.

Guidance is as follows (*please refer to link above for most current advice*):

- Minimise movement in the community wherever possible for 7 days from the date of last exposure.
- Work or study from home where it is practical to do so.
- If it is not practical to work or study from home, undertake a COVID-19 test in the 24 hours before returning to work and only attend if a negative result is returned and the person does not have any symptoms of COVID-19.
- Testing should be undertaken every 48 hours if ongoing attendance is required. Testing can stop 7 days from the date of last exposure.
- Wear a face mask in any indoor setting outside of the home.
- Only attend gatherings that are unavoidable. Undertake a COVID-19 test in the 24 hours prior to attending and only attend if a negative result is returned.
- Practice COVID Smart behaviours.
- Do not enter a high risk facility for 14 days from the date of last exposure, unless approval has been granted by the facility.
- Monitor closely for COVID-19 symptoms for the 14 days from date of last exposure. If symptoms develop, get a COVID-19 test (PCR preferred) and isolate until a negative result is received and symptoms resolve.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the person has symptoms and a negative RAT, a PCR test is recommended. • Have a COVID-19 test within the 48 hours prior to resuming normal activities and movement in the community and only leave home if a negative result is returned.
Action for Workplaces	<p>Workplaces should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider notifying relevant persons of an exposure in the workplace. • Reinforce the workplace COVID-19 Plan with employees and confirm obligations under work health and safety legislation. 	<p>Workplaces should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notify relevant persons that they are a moderate risk contact and should follow the ACT Health guidance. • Reinforce the workplace COVID-19 Plan with employees and confirm obligations under work health and safety legislation. 	<p>Workplaces should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notify relevant persons that they are a high risk contact and should follow the ACT Health guidance. • Implement work from home arrangements, wherever possible. • Inform and support staff to implement risk management guidance if they cannot work from home. • Where relevant, inform employees of leave entitlements. • Reinforce the workplace COVID-19 Plan with employees and protective measures such as physical distancing where possible, practising good hygiene and mask wearing requirements. • Ensure obligations under work health and safety legislation are being met and risk assessments are reviewed and updated as appropriate. • Where relevant, maintain ongoing contact with affected employees.

Return to the workplace	<p>Contacts from workplaces will not receive any communication directly from ACT Health.</p> <p>Contacts from workplaces should follow the advice on the ACT COVID-19 website. In particular, high risk contacts are recommended to minimise their movements, consistent with advice provided for Household Contacts.</p>
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Notes:

- High risk and household contacts may have been [exposed to COVID-19](#) outside the workplace.
 - Employees who are household contacts must advise their employer that they are a household contact so that employers can provide appropriate support.
 - High risk contacts are encouraged to advise their employer.
- [Mask wearing](#) refers to both the person who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 and the contact – both should have been wearing a mask appropriately (that is, over the nose and mouth, with a good fit).
- [Physical distancing](#) refers to a distance of 1.5 metres.
- COVID-19 guidance on ventilation is available on the [ACT COVID-19 website](#).
- There are only a small number of situations where a client, customer or visitor will be regarded as having had a potential exposure.
 - For most businesses, the majority will not fall within any of these exposure categories, noting that contact is likely to be brief (for example, point of sale interaction only) and with other risk mitigations in place – for example, masks, physical distancing.
 - Early consideration should be given to identifying potential exposure situations to enable risk mitigation, and if unable to mitigate against higher risk exposures, consider implementing a process that can identify and notify contacts should an exposure occur.
- Businesses and workplaces are strongly encouraged to provide rapid antigen tests (RATs) to staff who cannot practically work from home and where there is mutual consent to return to the workplace. Individuals can purchase RATs from most pharmacies and grocery stores.
- The ACT Government can provide RATs for those household contacts who cannot obtain them from their workplace or where they would experience financial hardship.
 - For further information, please see the [COVID-19 testing webpage](#).