



COVID-Safe for Employers
RESOURCE GUIDE



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Introduction

As we continue to recover from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, it's more important than ever that we come together and share in the responsibility of making our communities as safe as possible. And as your trusted healthcare partner, Atrium Health is committed to doing our part.



Atrium Health has been serving the members of our community since 1940. Over the past 80 years, we have grown into one of the nation's leading healthcare organizations recognized for quality, innovation and providing clinically excellent and compassionate care. We see it as our duty to not only care for our sick patients, but to serve as a healthcare resource and guide for community leaders and employers as they work to reopen safely.

There are still many unknowns about COVID-19, and new information is uncovered daily. It may seem overwhelming to keep up with the most recent guidance, let alone determine how to apply that information in a way that protects your employees.

Through our COVID-Safe for Employers initiative, Atrium Health has been helping organizations navigate the uncharted waters of coronavirus since early March 2020. Now, we're helping employers reopen by providing critical assistance with COVID-19 planning, screening and testing.

Our COVID-Safe for Employers Resource Guide compiles many of the tools and tips that we've previously distributed, along with new information and direction on protecting and supporting your employees as we push to reopen our businesses and communities.

As the largest employer in the region, Atrium Health knows firsthand what a tremendous responsibility it is to ensure that you have the right policies and procedures in place to protect your most important assets, your employees.

We hope you find the enclosed information valuable, and we look forward to serving as your trusted partner for information and care.

- Your Atrium Health Employer Solutions Team

COVID-19 Overview and Symptoms

What is Coronavirus?

Coronaviruses belong to a large family of viruses that cause colds and other respiratory illnesses. First identified in China in 2019, the current coronavirus outbreak is known as [COVID-19](#), short for “coronavirus disease 2019.”

While we’re learning more about the virus each day, experts believe that COVID-19 typically spreads from person to person through airborne droplets deposited as an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks. These droplets can make contact with the mouths or noses of people within about 6 feet of the infected person and be inhaled into the lungs.

COVID-19 Symptoms

While some infected individuals may experience no symptoms at all, those who do will typically develop symptoms between 2–14 days of exposure to the virus. Symptoms may be similar to those of a cold or the flu. People with the following symptoms may have COVID-19:



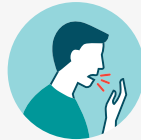
Fever



New loss of taste or smell



Muscle pain



Cough



Chills



Headache



Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing



Repeated shaking with chills



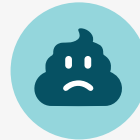
Sore throat



Congestion or runny nose

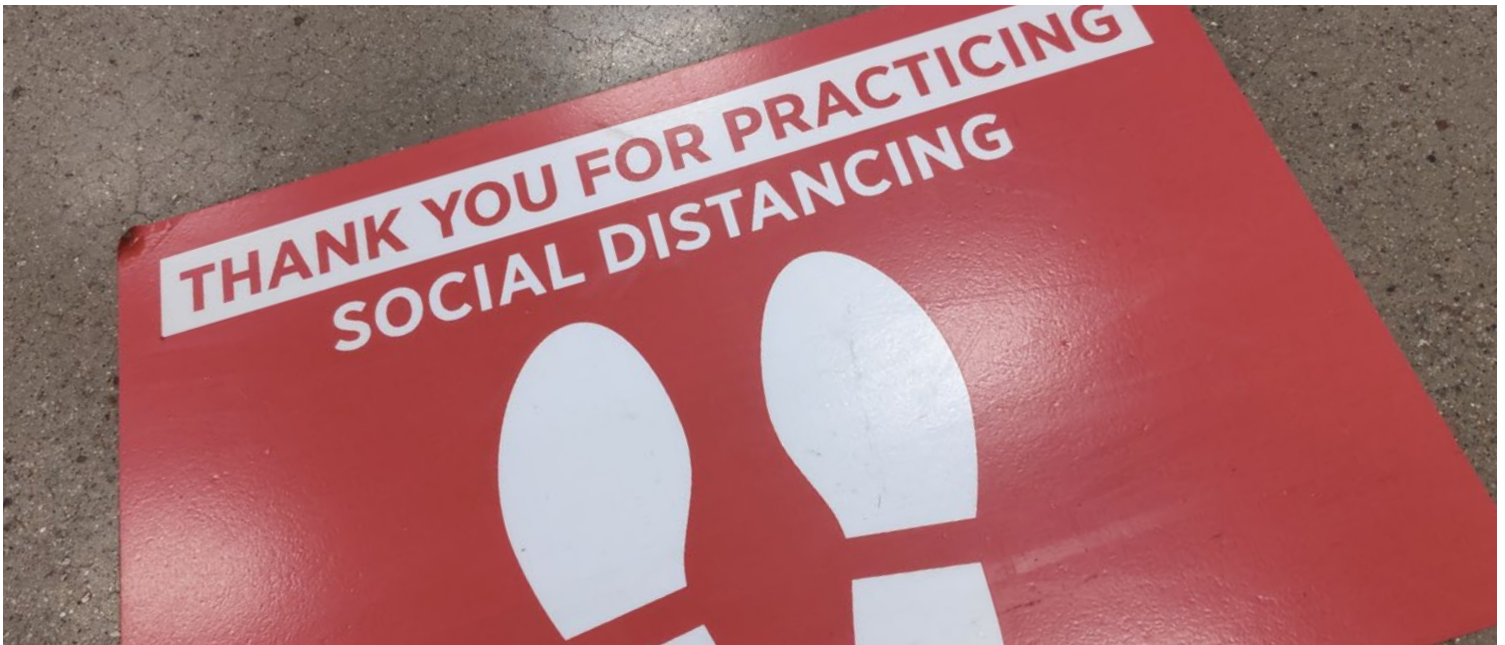


Nausea or vomiting



Diarrhea

Most people with COVID-19 experience only mild symptoms and can recover at home. However, sometimes COVID-19 causes more severe symptoms such as difficulty breathing, persistent chest pain or pressure, confusion, inability to wake up and bluish lips or face. If your symptoms are life-threatening, call 911 immediately.



Preventing Workplace Spread

Social/Physical Distancing

Social/physical distancing is one of the most important steps we can take to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Contacts made in the workplace represent 20–25% of all weekly contacts. And working generates 10 additional contacts per day compared to those who stay at home.¹

The industries that have the highest average number of contacts per day are:²

- Retail/hospitality – 90 contacts per day
- Manufacturing – 47 contacts per day

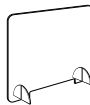
General Guidance



Encourage remote working whenever possible.



Maintain a 6-foot distance from others, especially in common areas of your workplace including elevators, restrooms and breakrooms. Limit movement around the office whenever possible.



Consider plexiglass cough guards for areas that should have separation between employees and customers (e.g., checkout lines).



Disinfect workstations daily. Frequently disinfect surfaces that are touched often (e.g., light switches, phones, calculators, doorknobs, etc.).

Sources

¹ Edwards et al. Eur J Public Health. 2016 Jun; 26(3):478-85 Ahmed et al. BMC Public Health. 2018; 18: 518
Published online 2018 Apr 18. doi: [10.1186/s12889-018-5446-1](https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-018-5446-1)

² Gallup Poll April 27 – March 3, 2020

Preventing Workplace Spread CONT.

Work Areas

Allow for a 6-foot diameter boundary around each active employee work area. This may include closing certain work areas or cubicles. Workstations should not be shared among employees, even on different days of work.

Conference Rooms

Avoid using conference rooms until social distancing restrictions are lifted. Consider using conference rooms and meeting spaces as workstations while maintaining 6 feet of separation.

Circulation

If office aisles are narrow and don't allow for 6 feet of separation, consider designating traffic flow in a circular manner and using taped arrows to indicate preferred flow. Consider designation of specific up vs. down elevators or stairwells to reduce traffic.

Amenities

Clean hands before and after using amenities. Offer sanitizer in your break rooms. Socially distance when using water dispensers, water fountains and ice makers. Refrigerators and microwaves should be cleaned when visibly soiled. Water fountains should be accessed with a cup only.

On-site Work Rotations (alternating who is in the office at any given time)

- Respect state social distancing and stay-at-home requirements.
- When possible, maintain your work-from-home practices (remote workforce).
- If remote work is not possible and employees must work at the office, maintain social distancing guidelines at all times.
- To ensure social distancing guidelines are maintained, consider alternate days or scheduling for your employees when possible.

Preventing Workplace Spread CONT.

Personal Protective Equipment

Determine the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) needed for all job functions, including:

- Masks/cloth face coverings
- Gloves
- Goggles
- Face shields
- Gowns

Have all employees wear a [mask](#) covering their mouth and nose when in the work environment.

- Employees alone in their offices do not need to keep their masks on.
 - Masks should always be worn when in common areas (hallways, stairwells, elevators, etc.).
-

Hand Hygiene

- Hand sanitizer should be available at entrances to the building and at strategic locations throughout the work environment.
 - All employees should practice good hand hygiene by regularly using alcohol-based hand sanitizer or washing with soap and water.
 - When [washing hands](#), lather soap with warm water for 20 seconds and then rinse.
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
-

Screening Employees Before Work

- The overall health of the workforce is essential. Before entry into the work environment each day, employees should be screened for signs and symptoms of illness.
- Consider gathering basic information, such as temperature, electronically. If an employee does not have home access to the internet or a thermometer, the information can be gathered upon arrival before entering the work environment.



Additional Protective Measures

HR Policies and Practices

Policies drive behavior, so it's important for employers to have flexible sick leave policies and supporting practices that encourage employees to stay home if they're not feeling well. Suggestions from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) include:

- Implementing flexible sick leave policies that are consistent with public health guidance
- Allowing employees to stay home to care for sick family members or children who are home due to school or childcare closures
- Non-punitive “emergency sick leave” policies for employers that do not currently offer sick leave
- Not requiring a COVID-19 test result or healthcare provider’s note from employees to validate their illness, qualify for sick leave, or to return to work

Employers should also encourage their employees to self-declare if they have a family member or close contact who has become a patient under evaluation for COVID-like symptoms. Employees should remain home in self-isolation until they know the patient’s status. If test results are negative, the employee can return to work. If test results are positive, the employee should follow the steps outlined under [Worksite Exposures](#).

Additional Protective Measures CONT.

High-Risk Employees

Consider special accommodations for vulnerable employees who are at higher risk of developing severe illness if they contract COVID-19.

Who is High-risk

According to the CDC, those at higher risk for severe illness include people 65 years and older and people with underlying medical conditions, such as:

- Chronic lung disease
- Moderate to severe asthma
- Serious heart conditions
- Immunocompromised (e.g., undergoing cancer treatment, smoker, immune deficiencies, HIV or AIDS, prolonged use of corticosteroids, etc.)
- Obesity (BMI of 40 or higher)
- Diabetes
- Chronic kidney disease, undergoing dialysis
- Liver disease

Special Accommodations

- Support and encourage [remote working](#)
- Offer duties that minimize contact with customers or other employees



Worksite Exposures

Even the most conscientious employers may have to contend with a COVID-19 worksite exposure. Developing a coronavirus exposure control plan in advance of an occurrence and communicating that plan across your leadership team will help contain spread and will minimize disruptions to daily business operations.

Identifying Exposures

Employees who have had “close contact” with a confirmed positive OR a possible/suspected individual with COVID-19 should be under surveillance. Therefore, it’s important to understand what constitutes close contact to appropriately identify employees who may have been exposed.

The CDC defines close contact as:

- Being within 6 feet of a person with COVID-19 for 15 minutes or more without a face covering
- Having unprotected direct contact with secretions or excretions of a COVID-19-positive person (e.g., being coughed on, touching used tissues with a bare hand)

The time frame for having contact with an individual includes the period of time of 48 hours before the individual became symptomatic.

Worksite Exposures CONT.

Symptomatic Employees

Employees who have a fever, cough or [other COVID-19 symptoms](#) may have coronavirus, and immediate action should be taken:

1. Separate symptomatic employees from others
2. Gather their belongings
3. [Send them home](#)
4. If symptoms are severe, such as difficulty breathing, send them to the ER
5. If symptoms are life-threatening, call 911 immediately

Most cases of coronavirus involve mild symptoms and can be safely managed at home. After employees are home, they should monitor their symptoms. If symptoms worsen, they should contact their primary care provider, call 704-468-8888 or visit [AtriumHealth.org/GetCareNow](https://www.atriumhealth.org/GetCareNow).

Employees With COVID-like Symptoms: Employees should stay out of work until the following have been satisfied:

- At least 1 day (24 hours) has passed since:
 - ✓ Their fever is gone without using any medicines, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen (Advil) or naproxen sodium (Aleve), to reduce it
 - ✓ Their symptoms are better

AND

- ✓ At least 10 days have passed since their symptoms first appeared

A negative COVID-19 test result does not change the course of action recommended above. False negative test results can and do occur due to inferior test quality, a poorly administered test, or testing too early or too late when there aren't sufficient quantities of the virus to render a positive result.

Worksite Exposures CONT.

Managing Exposures

Notify Exposed Contacts: Employees who have had close contact with a confirmed positive OR a possible/suspected individual with COVID-19 should be notified immediately. Non-essential employees who are at work when they are notified should be [sent home](#). For “essential” employees, also known as critical infrastructure workers, please follow [CDC guidance](#).

Exposed Non-Essential Employees: Employees who have been exposed to a confirmed positive OR a possible/suspected individual with COVID-19 should:

- [Stay home](#) for 14 days. Start to count from the last day they had contact with that person.
- Limit their contact with others in their house. Stay at least 6 feet away from others in their house.
- Watch for [signs](#) of COVID-19, such as fever, cough, shortness of breath or new loss of taste/smell. If they have any of these, isolate (stay away from others) in their home until at least 1 day (24 hours) has passed since:
 - ✓ Their fever is gone without using any medicines, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen (Advil) or naproxen sodium (Aleve), to reduce it
 - ✓ Their symptoms are better

AND

- ✓ At least 10 days have passed since their symptoms first appeared

A negative COVID-19 test result does not change the course of action recommended above. False negative test results can and do occur due to inferior test quality, a poorly administered test, or testing too early or too late when there aren't sufficient quantities of the virus to render a positive result.

Worksite Exposures CONT.

COVID-Positive With Symptoms: Employees who have tested positive for COVID-19 **and** who have symptoms should stay out of work until the following have been satisfied:

- At least 1 day (24 hours) has passed since:
 - ✓ Their fever is gone without using any medicines, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen (Advil) or naproxen sodium (Aleve), to reduce it
 - ✓ Their symptoms are better

AND

- ✓ At least 10 days have passed since their symptoms first appeared

COVID-Positive Without Symptoms: Employees who have tested positive for COVID-19 but have no symptoms may return to work if they continue to have no symptoms:

- After 10 days have passed since their test

Screening and Testing Solutions

As part of Atrium Health's [COVID-Safe for Employers initiative](#), we're providing critical screening and testing solutions, as well as expert guidance and support, to help employers reopen as safely as possible. And our offerings can be customized based on your organization's unique needs.



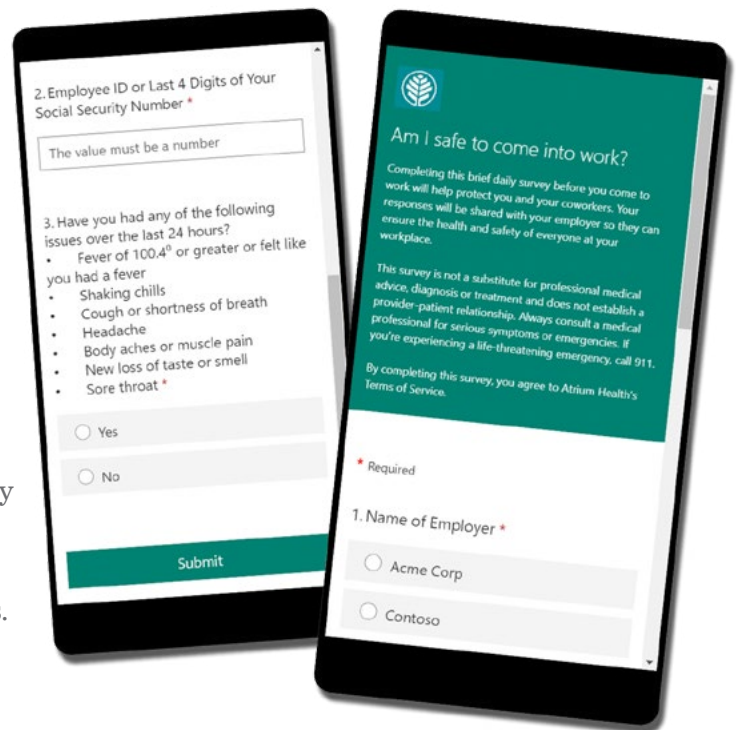
Symptom Checker Tool

Screening employees each day before they arrive at work, along with physical distancing and having them wear personal protective equipment (PPE) are recommended to protect your workforce from a COVID-19 occupational exposure. Atrium Health is offering employers a symptom checker tool free of charge, which allows employees to record the presence or absence of COVID-19 symptoms.

Getting started is easy. Employers simply provide a current employee eligibility file and the contact information for the individual(s) who will be checking results. The individual(s) checking results will be able to access their employee symptom checker results in real time.

Employees will fill out a brief digital survey about COVID-19 symptoms before coming into work each day. If they indicate that they're experiencing any of the symptoms listed, they'll be instructed not to report to work and to follow their standard work procedure for calling in sick. They'll also be instructed to get care if their symptoms worsen. If employees respond that they're not experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19, they'll be notified that they're safe to go into work.

For more information about Atrium Health's COVID-Safe for Employers screening and testing solutions, email COVID19RTW@AtriumHealth.org.



Screening and Testing Solutions CONT.



Worksite Exposure Management

Taking the proper precautions ahead of time is your best course of action to protect your workforce from becoming infected. However, even with the best safeguards in place, it's possible that you will have a COVID-19 worksite exposure. If that happens, Atrium Health is here to help.

To begin, Atrium Health will work with you to determine what level of exposure your employees have sustained. This will aid you in determining which employees should be removed from the workplace and quarantined at home.



After the high-risk exposures have been identified, they'll be connected to Atrium Health's virtual observation unit. Using telemedicine, our specialized care team will remotely monitor your employees while they safely self-isolate in the comfort of their own home.

Diagnostic testing at one of Atrium Health's COVID-19 testing sites will be scheduled 4–7 days after the exposure. If an employee develops symptoms, our care team will reach out to the employee and determine the appropriate course of action.

Patients can easily access their results on [MyAtriumHealth](#) as part of their online health record. Employees can also receive results by text. Those with positive results will be enrolled into Atrium Health's COVID-19 Virtual Hospital and will receive a follow-up phone call from a nurse who is assigned to provide the care they need to recover.

With Atrium Health's Worksite Exposure Management program, you can rest assured that your employees will receive the best care possible.

For more information about Atrium Health's COVID-Safe for Employers screening and testing solutions, email COVID19RTW@AtriumHealth.org.

Screening and Testing Solutions CONT.



On-Site Post-Exposure Testing

The N.C. Department of Health and Human Services recommends that individuals who have been in close contact with a known COVID-19-positive person should be tested following the exposure, regardless of symptoms. But when a COVID-19 exposure occurs at work, multiple employees may be affected making it challenging for employers to manage.

Atrium Health's On-Site Post-Exposure Testing program takes the burden of coordinating testing after a workplace exposure occurs off employers by deploying a team of experienced healthcare professionals to the employer's worksite. Through this program, asymptomatic (showing no symptoms) employees who have either been in close contact (within 6 feet for at least 15 minutes) with a COVID-19-positive person OR who have had unprotected direct contact with the virus droplet discharge from a COVID-19-positive person (e.g., being coughed on, touching used tissues with a bare hand, etc.) are eligible for testing.

How it works: Testing events are scheduled 4 to 7 days after an exposure occurs. Test samples are collected from employees using a cotton-tipped applicator to swab the inside edge of both nostrils. During the testing event, Atrium Health professionals take all necessary precautions to ensure the safety of participants and staff, including wearing appropriate PPE, prescreening for symptoms and disinfecting high-touch surfaces between each use.

Test results will be available to employees 3 to 5 days after the testing event. Employees can receive their results by text message and/or on through their [MyAtriumHealth](#) account. In addition, employers will receive a comprehensive results report for all employees tested.

For more information about Atrium Health's COVID-Safe for Employers screening and testing solutions, email COVID19RTW@AtriumHealth.org.



Screening and Testing Solutions CONT.



On-Site Antibody Testing



Delivered by a team of highly trained professionals, this service brings antibody testing directly to your worksite. Antibody testing may provide information about prior exposure to COVID-19. The presence of antibodies in a person's blood may help determine their immune response to the virus as well as support future research.

Atrium Health is committed to providing the highest quality antibody testing available on the market for COVID-19. And because Atrium Health's laboratory has validated the test, you can take comfort in knowing that the results are coming from a trusted source.

COVID-Safe precautions, including screening participants before testing, will be implemented for everyone's safety. Blood samples will be collected by drawing blood from a vein, also known as venipuncture. Anyone who arrives at the testing site with symptoms will be referred for additional care.

On the day of testing, employees will be given educational materials about the test. And when they receive their results, they'll also receive information that explains what the results mean. Following testing, employers will receive a report of the results.

For more information about Atrium Health's COVID-Safe for Employers screening and testing solutions, email COVID19RTW@AtriumHealth.org.

Atrium Health COVID-Safe Care

Atrium Health is committed to keeping our patients, visitors and teammates safe across all of our care locations, so we're leading the way forward and setting the national standard for COVID-Safe care. We've implemented extensive safety measures across all locations – so you can feel confident and comfortable each time you visit us.

See below for just a few ways that we're keeping everyone COVID-Safe:

Delivering the Right Care, the Right Way

Whether by phone, video or an in-person visit, we'll make sure your employees receive the proper care they need in the safest way possible.

Making Masks Mandatory

We ask that all people entering our facilities wear a [mask](#). While wearing your own mask is encouraged, we're happy to provide one if you don't have your own.

Reducing Visitors

To help prevent the spread of illness, we respectfully request that patients be accompanied by no more than one visitor. This includes children.

Keeping Facilities Clean

In addition to our regular extensive daily cleaning procedures, we've implemented extra steps to further fight germs. This includes cleaning frequently touched surfaces, such as doorknobs and light switches every 30 minutes and deep-sanitization of exam rooms between patients.

Limiting Potential Exposure

To limit potential COVID-19 exposure to patients, we've installed cough guards at all front desk areas and removed magazines and books. When possible, we will allow patients to bypass the waiting area and go straight to an exam room. We also encourage patients and visitors to use hand sanitizer upon entering and leaving our facilities.

Screening All Patients and Staff

When patients arrive at one of our locations, our staff will check their temperature and ask about COVID-19-related symptoms before they enter. Those who show signs of COVID-19 or have a high temperature will be asked to return to their car and receive virtual care from one of our experienced healthcare providers. Just like our patients, all staff members are screened before the start of each shift.

Virtual Coronavirus Hospital

Our first-of-its-kind COVID-19 Virtual Hospital allows COVID-19-positive patients to receive care in the comfort of their own home.

COVID-Safe care is practiced at all Atrium Health locations. For more information on Atrium Health's COVID-Safe care standards, visit AtriumHealth.org/SAFE.



Resources

As this situation is still evolving, guidance is subject to change. For the latest recommendations, please refer to the following resources for businesses and employers:

- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- [North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services](#)
- [South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control](#)
- [Georgia Department of Public Health](#)
- [Atrium Health Employer Resource Center](#) – Stay up-to-date with how to keep your workplace COVID-Safe by visiting our online resource center.

For other employer-related COVID-19 questions, or to be added to our COVID-19 distribution list, email us at COVID19RTW@AtriumHealth.org or visit AtriumHealth.org/Coronavirus.



Atrium Health

AtriumHealth.org/EmployerSolutions

704-631-1200 | EmployerSolutions@AtriumHealth.org