

## Common questions and answers regarding COVID-19

### 1. What do I do if I or an employee test positive for COVID-19?

Public health recommends that if you test positive for COVID-19, or if you have symptoms without testing:

- You should isolate for 5 days after your symptoms started and until you have no fever and your other symptoms have improved over the past 24 hours.
- If you don't have symptoms and test positive, you should isolate for 5 days after your test date.

Lingering symptoms such as cough or loss of taste or smell can persist beyond the isolation period, and if present, are not reasons for continuing isolation.

### 2. I have a sub-contractor coming into Manitoba from outside of Canada. What are their self-isolation requirements and when can they return to work?

Starting April 1, 2022, pre-entry tests will no longer be required for fully vaccinated travellers entering Canada by land, air or water.

Employees may be exempt from mandatory quarantine requirements under certain conditions, including if they:

- Qualify as a fully vaccinated traveller
- Provide essential services

### 3. What if I have employees who refuse work because of COVID-19?

Employers should be prepared for potential work refusals from employees concerned about the risk of exposure to COVID-19 at work.

Should a worker exercise their right to refuse dangerous work, an employer must investigate the request (in the presence of a worker rep or committee member) and remedy any unsafe condition, or confirm that such action has or is being taken. This should fulfill the employer's responsibility and demonstrate that appropriate steps are being taken to protect workers.

If the situation cannot be resolved internally, Manitoba Workplace Safety and Health (WSH) can be contacted to determine the appropriateness of the work refusal. During the refusal process, the worker must continue to be paid. If a WSH safety and health officer determines the worker can return to work and the worker continues to refuse, the employer is no longer required to pay the worker. Workers can be assigned alternate duties during the refusal process.

WSH has indicated it will address COVID-related work refusal questions as quickly as possible, usually the same day. WSH can be contacted 24 hours per day, 7 days per week at 204-957-7233, or toll free at 1-855-957-7233.

The key factors considered by WSH include: whether someone at work is confirmed to have the virus; whether the workplace is high-risk; is the worker likely to be exposed to the virus while at work; does the workplace have reasonable controls in place to minimize the risk of COVID-19 infection.

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is especially important for employers to be proactive in implementing public health guidance and taking reasonable controls to reduce or eliminate the risk.

For information from Manitoba Workplace Safety and Health on work refusals and its guideline related to COVID-19 visit:

[https://www.gov.mb.ca/asset\\_library/en/coronavirus/workplaces-right-to-refuse-dangerous-work.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/asset_library/en/coronavirus/workplaces-right-to-refuse-dangerous-work.pdf)

#### **4. Should an employer ask for a doctor's note?**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, employers should not request a doctor's verification note. This allows health system resources to be allocated to COVID-19 priorities.

#### **5. Can we send employees home who we think may have been exposed to or show symptoms of COVID-19?**

Employees who exhibit symptoms of COVID-19, been exposed to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 or have been exposed to COVID-19 in a work or public setting can be sent home by their employer to prevent the illness from spreading to others.

Employers have the responsibility to protect the safety and health of their employees.

If an employer concludes there is a risk that the employee has been exposed to the COVID-19 it is reasonable to require the employee not to be in the workplace.

The Shared Health Manitoba Screening Tool may help employers assess the health of workers or anyone entering the site. Please visit

<https://sharedhealthmb.ca/covid19/screening-tool/> for more information.

#### **6. If a worker develops COVID-19 symptoms, are other workers from the same jobsite or workplace required to self-isolate?**

Public health recommends that workers self-monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 for 14 days following the exposure and isolate immediately if any develop. If you live in a First Nation community, check with your community for further guidance.

Workers should be very cautious during their self-monitoring period and avoid any non-essential visits to high-risk settings or non-essential contact with individuals at high risk for severe disease from COVID-19.

Workers testing positive for COVID-19 should isolate and follow guidance for COVID-19 cases.

If workers develop symptoms and are not tested, they should isolate and follow guidance for COVID-19 cases.

**7. If a worker who is asymptomatic (shows no symptoms of COVID-19) is being tested for COVID-19, are other workers from the same jobsite or workplace required to self-isolate?**

Public Health advises that close contacts should self-monitor for symptoms and are not routinely required to self-isolate, except where advised by public health in high risk situations, such as outbreaks. If you live in a First Nation community, check with your community for further guidance.

**8. What do I do if an employee is ill and requires time off due to COVID-19?**

The same rules apply to sick leave due to COVID-19 as any other sick leave. In Manitoba the Employment Standards Code currently provides that employees who have been employed for at least 30 days with the employer are entitled to 3 days of unpaid leave for personal illness or family responsibility, and up to 17 weeks of unpaid job-protected leave for long-term illness. Employers should follow the practices set out in their sick leave policy.

In the absence of company paid sick-leave benefits, employees may be entitled to sickness benefits under the Employment Insurance Act (Canada), commonly referred to as “EI benefits”.

**Note:** This information is intended as best practice guidance, not as medical or legal advice. Information about COVID-19 changes rapidly. Always refer to a public health authority for medical advice, and consult legal counsel regarding legislative concerns.