

Racine Public Health Dept.: Issues guidance for employees returning to work following a COVID-19 infection

Posted on Thursday, Aug 27, 2020

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

CDC and Wisconsin DHS issue new recommendations that can be applied locally

City of Racine – The City of Racine Public Health Department is seeking help from local employers in addressing the needs of the community and to assist members of the workforce while they return to work following COVID-19 infection. Due to the ever-changing nature of the COVID-19 pandemic and new research indicating **most people with mild to moderate COVID-19 infections do not remain contagious beyond 10 days from symptom onset**, recommendations from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (WI DHS) for release from isolation after infection have been revised.

The latest recommendations from the CDC and WI DHS indicate that a test-based strategy, or the practice of requiring a series of negative test results before an individual can return to work, is **no longer appropriate in most situations**. In fact, this method may leave individuals in isolation for longer than is necessary.

Instead, **a symptom-based strategy is recommended**. This strategy requires all three of the following criteria to be met for release from isolation:

- At least 10 days must pass from the date of symptom onset,
- At least 24 hours must pass since the individual's last fever (without the use of fever-reducing medications),

- Other symptoms must be improving.

For those who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 but remain asymptomatic, the isolation period ends 10 days after the test date. For individuals who develop severe illness, the duration of isolation may be as long as 20 days following symptom onset. This decision is made on a case-by-case basis in consultation with health care providers and public health officials.

The City of Racine Public Health Department, following CDC and WI DHS guidance, has adopted the use of a symptom-based strategy for the release from isolation of individuals diagnosed with COVID-19. Similarly, it requests that local employers adopt this standard for allowing their employees to return to work. Many local employers retain the requirement of two negative tests from their employees before they are allowed to return to work.

“The requirement of two negative tests before an individual is allowed to resume working, even after they have been released from isolation by the Public Health Department, places an undue burden on residents to locate testing opportunities,” **said Dottie-Kay Bowersox, Public Health Administrator for the City of Racine.** “Shortages in test supplies continue to negatively impact the ability of residents here in Racine and elsewhere to seek testing. This is particularly problematic for those individuals who are asymptomatic, so we ask local businesses to follow the best available public health evidence and allow these individuals to return to work after they have met our isolation release criteria.”

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services provides more information on the latest recommendations for release from isolation following COVID-19 infection here: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/diagnosed.htm>

The Public Health Department would also like to reiterate that quarantine following exposure to someone with COVID-19 requires an individual to remain at home for 14 days from the time of exposure. A negative test result does not shorten the 14 days or end quarantine. Additionally, those who have been tested, particularly if they are symptomatic, should remain at home until they receive their results and further guidance from public health or a health care provider.

About the City of Racine

With a population of 78,000, Racine, Wisconsin is the fifth largest municipality in the

state of Wisconsin. It is home to manufacturing businesses that enjoy world-wide reputations, SC Johnson, CNH Industrial, Twin Disc, Modine, and In-Sink-Erator among them. Racine is also home to diverse cultures, a thriving downtown, and world-class beaches along the shores of Lake Michigan.