Covid and work

If an employee gets covid

If someone finds out they've tested positive for covid-19 (coronavirus) or has covid symptoms, they should tell their employer.

'Self-isolating' (staying at home) is no longer a legal requirement. But if someone has covid symptoms or has tested positive, they should follow government guidance and any policy their organisation has.

Follow the government guidance for:

- England – people with covid symptoms on GOV.UK
- Scotland – people with covid symptoms on NHS inform
- Wales – people with covid symptoms on the Welsh Government website

Employees might be concerned that they've worked with someone with covid. Employers can reassure them by making clear what they're doing to keep the workplace safe.

Employees should speak to their employer if they have any concerns or are not sure about whether they should self-isolate.

Returning to work after being off sick with covid

When someone has been off sick with covid and is ready to go back to work, they should talk with their employer as early as possible.

There's currently no legally required length of time someone with covid should stay off work.

Employers should follow the government guidance for England, Scotland or Wales.

An employer might decide it's not safe for someone to return to the workplace. For example, if an employee no longer has symptoms but is still testing positive. The employer will need to decide how to record this type of absence. It is unlikely to be sickness absence.

The employer should also consider how an employee will be paid for their absence.

If someone is ready to go back to the workplace, they should check their organisation's sickness and absence policies. The policies might give extra information about returning to work.

Returning to work with long covid

People with long covid might need ongoing support and further sick leave after they've returned to work.

Find out more about long covid

People at high risk from covid

Employers should be aware that some employees with weakened immune systems might still be at high risk of serious illness from covid.

People at high risk should follow the same guidance as everyone else but there could be additional precautions they want to take.

Employers should consider extra steps to keep people at high risk safe. They could:

- look at ways to support their work, for example allowing them to work from home where possible
- provide extra safety measures at their workplace
- update health and safety policies to cover people who are at high risk

Read government guidance for:

- England – GOV.UK guidance for people whose immune system means they are at higher risk
- Scotland – Scottish Government advice for people who were on the Highest Risk list

Contact the Acas helpline

If you have any questions about work and covid, contact the Acas helpline.