

Guidance on COVID Testing of Asymptomatic Employees

While employers would naturally like to be sure their workforce is COVID-free, testing all employees including those without symptoms will not provide an “all clear” of not being able to contract or spread COVID for the following reasons:

- **Test Accuracy**
Employees who show negative test results may actually have the COVID virus because available tests are not 100% accurate. Studies have shown that up to 30% of COVID test results may be “false negatives”. In addition, it is possible that an employee who was tested very early in their infection could have been below the level of detection and will test positive later.
- **Future Exposure**
Employees who test negative at one point in time are still at risk of contracting the COVID-19 virus any time after the test was performed, for example at lunch, in meetings with others or in their activities after work or at home. Simply put, a negative test result does not rule out getting sick later and bringing it into the workplace.
- **Other Sources**
While it is not thought to be a primary way the virus spreads, it is possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object, like a packaging container, that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose or eyes.

Best Practices

Employers should follow best practices as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. These include allowing employees to work from home whenever possible, requiring that employees not come to work if they are sick and pre-screening employees for COVID symptoms.

- **Pre-Screening:** According to the CDC, employers should ideally measure employee temperatures and assess symptoms before they enter the facility to begin work. As long as the employee does not have a fever, cough or other flu-like symptoms, they should self-monitor under the supervision of the employee’s occupational health program.
- **Social Distancing:** Employees should maintain at least 6 feet between themselves and others.
- **Hand Washing:** Employees should be reminded to wash their hands frequently, using soap and water for 20 seconds or hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- **Use of Masks:** Each employee should wear a face mask at all times where possible and specifically for 14 days after a known COVID exposure. Employers can issue facemasks or can approve the employees’ supplied cloth face coverings in the event of shortages.
- **Clean & Disinfect:** Regular cleaning is recommended for commonly touched surfaces using soap and water and disinfectant products.

For more information on COVID-19, go to <https://www.cdc.gov/>.

You may also visit hollandhospital.org or call our COVID-19 HOTLINE at (616) 394-2080 daily from 7 AM to 8 PM.