In light of the anticipated COVID-19 surge and based on the questions I have been seeing, now is a good time to remind everyone when an employee can return to work following a positive COVID-19 test.

Formerly, we recommended a test-based strategy to return to work, which at times was not viable due to test scarcity, and now is no longer recommended because scientists are learning that some people can test positive LONG after they have recovered from COVID-19 and are no longer contagious. Instead, the symptom-based assessment, matched with timing, is the recommended method of determining when people can return to work.

The current standard is as follows:

- At least 24 hours have passed since the last fever (without the use of fever-reducing medicine);
- All symptoms are improving or stable;
- No new symptoms have emerged.

For asymptomatic people:

- Ten days have passed since the date that the sample/swab was taken for the COVID-19 test that had a positive result.

What gets complicated is when there has been known or possible exposure to COVID-19. These situations are very fact specific, but the rule of thumb is that if there has been "close contact" with a **_confirmed_** case of COVID-19, then the employee should quarantine for 10 days without development of symptoms, or seven days with a negative COVID-19 test. The CDC continues to recommend a 14-day quarantine as a best practice scenario, but a 10-day quarantine will suffice.

Close contact is defined as:

- Being within 6 feet of someone who has COVID-19 for a total of 15 minutes or more
- Providing care at home to someone who is sick with COVID-19
- Having direct physical contact with the person (hugged or kissed them) with COVID-19
- Sharing eating or drinking utensils with a person who developed COVID-19 shortly afterwards
- Having the unfortunate experience of being sneezed, coughed, or otherwise getting respiratory droplets on you from a person who has COVID-19 or developed it shortly afterwards