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Oklahoma City-County Health Department Encourages Businesses to follow Symptom-Based Return to Work Strategy following COVID-19 Isolation

(Oklahoma City) - Oklahoma City-County Health Department is encouraging businesses to follow the updated CDC recommended guidance of a symptom-based return to work strategy for the majority of COVID-19 cases. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/return-to-work.html>

Eddie Withers, Epidemiologist with OCCHD, emphasized that recommendations for return to work have altered and businesses should consider adopting the CDC sanctioned symptom-based strategy to allow employees to return to work. "The research shows that people are no longer infectious after 10 days from symptom onset/positive test," said Withers. Withers went on to say that even those that are immunocompromised or those with a severe COVID response are infectious no more than 20 days, but he urged discretion for these situations.

"Regarding isolation, we are currently going with the symptom-based strategy," Withers said. "It basically requires an isolation period of 10 days from symptom onset or date of a positive test result if symptoms were not present," added Withers.

Many businesses are still following a test-based strategy, requiring two negative tests before discontinuing isolation and allowing employees to return to work. "Unfortunately, many individuals are scheduling and testing multiple times before they get that negative response," according to Lynnda Parker, OCCHD Clinical Operations Manager.

Symptom-Based Strategy

Withers, again in following the latest CDC guidance, does not recommend this continued test-based strategy in most cases. Withers did urge caution, recognizing that situations involving immunocompromised individuals or perhaps persons in certain healthcare settings with severe illness should follow more stringent criteria or continue to apply the test-based strategy.

About Oklahoma City-County Health Department

Established in 1910, Oklahoma City-County Health Department (OCCHD) is committed to protecting health, promoting wellness, and preventing disease to ensure a healthy future for the Oklahoma County-area community. OCCHD was one of the first public health departments in the nation to receive accreditation by the Public Health Accreditation Board. For more information, please visit www.occhd.org.