# Updated CDC Guidance on Return to Work Following Exposure

## Introduction

Last night the Center for Disease Control and Prevention released revised guidance for the return to work process for essential employees who have been exposed to COVID-19. Under this guidance, employees are permitted to continue working after a potential exposure to COVID-19, if they remain asymptomatic and additional precautions are in place to protect the employee, their co-workers, and the community. The precautions identified by the CDC are already in place through the Sonoco COVID-19 response processes and are outlined below. We will continue to monitor the CDC and will update you as guidance evolves.

## Revised CDC Guidance Document



## Precautions Recommended by the CDC & Sonoco’s Response

1. Pre-Screen

The Employee Health Screen requires that employees monitor their temperatures and other symptoms. Employees experiencing fever or other symptoms are encouraged to call in before reporting to work. In addition, employees who have been sent home or quarantined by a healthcare provider have separate guidance on the length of time they must be symptom free before returning to work.

1. Regular Monitoring

The Employee Health Screen requires that employees monitor their temperatures and other symptoms. Employees experiencing fever or other symptoms are encouraged to call in before reporting to work.

1. Wear a Mask[[1]](#footnote-1)

The Risk & Exposure Matrix in the Sonoco Workplace Controls document already identifies ‘Close Contact Exposure’ as High Risk and requires that the employee quarantine for the most stringent time length between the healthcare provider, state/local guidance, or 14 days. As such, we should not have employees in this group back at work in the plant within 14 days to require them to wear a mask. However, Sonoco is working to make face coverings broadly available at sites and encourage their use to stem the transmission of COVID-19.

1. Social Distancing

The Social Distancing protocols outlined in the Sonoco Workplace Controls document already incorporate the Social Distancing recommendations outlined here.

1. Disinfect and Clean Workspaces

The Cleaning protocols outlined in the Sonoco Workplace Controls document already incorporate the Disinfecting and Cleaning recommendations outlined here. In addition, we have made post-exposure cleaning by a national company accessible for all sites.

## Key Definitions

*Potential Exposure*

A potential exposure means being a household contact or having “close contact” within 6 feet of an individual with confirmed or suspected COVID-19. The timeframe for having contact with an individual includes the period of time of 48 hours before the individual became symptomatic.

*Close Contact*

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, close contact is defined as:  
a) Being within approximately 6 feet (2 meters) of a COVID-19 case for a prolonged period of time; close contact can occur while caring for, living with, visiting, or sharing a healthcare waiting area or room with a COVID-19 case  
-- or –  
b) having direct contact with infectious secretions of a COVID-19 case (e.g., being coughed on)  
Close Contacts can be family members, coworkers, friends and healthcare providers. People truly need to understand the difference between being a contact, and coming into contact with the infected patient.  
  
In accordance with the CDC definition of close contact, contact requires both time and distance. For example, you may have passed by a person with COVID-19 in a hallway, in which case you did come into contact and meet the distance criteria. But if you truly just passed each other, and the infected patient did not cough, sneeze, or wipe his or her hands on you, then you don’t meet the ‘prolonged time’ requirement and therefore are not at risk of COVID-19 exposure.

1. The revised CDC guidance for Critical Workers allows essential or critical workers to come back to work, using a face covering and social distancing, sooner than the 14-day quarantine period advised for non-essential workers. Sonoco places the health and safety of all our employees foremost, and as such will continue to apply the longer, 14-day quarantine period to our essential workers who have experienced a close contact exposure. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)