NC DEPARTMENT OF
**HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES**

Interim Guidance for Manufacturing and Meat and Poultry Processing Plants
(Updated August 20, 2021)

Meat and poultry processing facilities should continue to follow existing CDC and OSHA guidelines on mitigating and preventing the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace. The guidance below will further assist employers to help slow the spread of COVID-19.

This guidance covers the following topics:
- Vaccination
- Cloth Face Coverings
- Social Distancing and Minimizing Exposure
- Handling Possible, Suspected, Presumptive, or Confirmed Cases of COVID-19
- Surveillance and Screening Testing
- Cleaning and Hygiene
- Communications and Combatting Misinformation
- Additional Resources

Vaccination
We strongly recommend all employers to direct employees and customers to information Find Your Spot, Take Your Shot and encourage them to get vaccinated. For guidance on vaccinations, please refer to our Interim Guidance for Individuals Who Have Been Vaccinated Against COVID-19 and Recommendations for Protecting Each Other.

It is strongly recommended that businesses:

❑ Require employees to report vaccination status.
  o Under state and federal law, employers may legally require employees to be vaccinated or require employees to disclose their COVID-19 vaccination status.
❑ Require employees who are unvaccinated, or do not disclose vaccine status, participate in screening/testing programs.

It is recommended that businesses:
❑ Partner with vaccine providers (e.g., hospitals, local health departments, pharmacies) to provide onsite vaccination.
  o Employers can contact their local health department for help with finding vaccine resources in their community (https://www.ncalhd.org/map/).
❑ Offer paid time off to staff receiving a vaccination if they are experiencing side effects.

- ❑ Consider a staggered schedule for employee vaccinations to avoid several employees experiencing temporary reactions at the same time.
- ❑ Helping with scheduling vaccines, reminders, or transportation for workers to vaccine sites are other ways that employers can encourage their employees to get vaccinated. See Incentivize COVID-19 Vaccine for more ways to encourage vaccinations.

Cloth Face Coverings

There is evidence that wearing a face covering can help reduce the spread of COVID-19, especially because people may be infected with the virus and not know it.

Businesses are strongly recommended to:
- ❑ Have all employees and visitors who are not fully vaccinated wear a face covering when they are indoors and maintain physical distance from other, unless the individual states that an exception applies.

It is recommended that businesses:

- ❑ Have all vaccinated employees and visitors wear face coverings when they are indoors and less than 6ft away from others, if they are in county of high or substantial levels of transmission as defined by the CDC.
- ❑ Post signage saying all employees and visitors should wear a face covering if they are in a county of high or substantial levels of transmission as defined by the CDC. English: Option 1 | Option 2, Spanish: Option 1 | Option 2
- ❑ Provide face coverings to employees and visitors to wear while in the establishment.
- ❑ Visit NC DHHS COVID-19 response site for more information about the face covering guidance and access sign templates that are available in English and Spanish.

Social Distancing and Minimizing Exposure

Social distancing is one of the important tools we currently have to decrease the spread of COVID-19. Social distancing ("physical distancing") means keeping space between yourself and other people outside of your home. If you are not fully vaccinated, stay at least 6 feet (about 2 arms' length) from other people; do not gather in groups; stay out of crowded places and avoid mass gatherings.

Businesses are recommended to:

- ❑ Minimize opportunities for close contact when occupying shared space by ensuring sufficient social distancing with at least 6 feet between people who are not fully vaccinated or for whom vaccination status is not known.
- ❑ Provide signage and frequent reminders for employees who are not fully vaccinated to stay at least 6 feet apart from one another when feasible.
- ❑ Provide physical guides, such as tape on floors or sidewalks and signs on walls to ensure that individuals who are not fully vaccinated remain at least 6 feet apart in lines, while using elevators and stairways and at other times.
- ❑ Take steps to increase airflow and ventilation – e.g., open windows when possible.

Handling Possible, Suspected, Presumptive, or Confirmed Cases of COVID-19

Staff should be encouraged to self-monitor for symptoms such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath.

If they develop symptoms of COVID-19, they should notify their supervisor and return home. More information on how to monitor for symptoms is available from the CDC.

> **Diagnosed:** People presumed to have or are diagnosed with COVID-19 must stay home and **isolate** until they meet the criteria for return to work. Staying home when sick with COVID-19 is essential to keeping COVID-19 infections out of businesses and preventing spread to others.
>
> **Exposed**: It is also essential for people who are not fully vaccinated to **quarantine** after a recent close contact to someone with COVID-19. Close contact with a case is defined as being physically exposed within 6 feet of another person for 15 minutes or longer cumulatively, within a 24-hour period.

Businesses are recommended to:

❑ Have a plan in place for immediately removing employees from work if symptoms develop while at work. Employees who have symptoms when they arrive at work or become sick during the day should immediately be separated from other employees, customers, and visitors and sent home or to their healthcare provider.

❑ Post signage at the main entrance requesting that people who are symptomatic with fever and/or cough not enter, such as Know Your Ws/Stop if You Have Symptoms flyers (English - Color, Black & White; Spanish - Color, Black & White).

❑ Establish and enforce sick leave policies to prevent the spread of disease, including:
   o Enforcing employees staying home if sick.
   o Encouraging liberal use of sick leave policy.
   o Expanding paid leave policies to allow employees to stay home when sick.

❑ Per CDC guidelines, if an employee has been diagnosed with COVID-19 or is presumed positive by a medical professional due to symptoms, the employee should be excluded from work until:
   o No fever for at least 24 hours since recovery (without the use of fever-reducing medicine) AND
   o Other symptoms have improved (e.g., coughing, shortness of breath) AND
   o At least 10 days have passed since first symptoms
   *A test-based strategy is no longer recommended to discontinue isolation or precautions and employers should not require documentation of a negative test before allowing a worker to return.

❑ Per CDC guidelines, if an employee has been diagnosed with COVID-19 but does not have symptoms, they should remain out of work until 10 days have passed since the date of their first positive COVID-19 diagnostic test, assuming they have not subsequently developed symptoms since their positive test.

❑ Require symptomatic employees to wear masks until leaving the facility. Cleaning and disinfecting procedure should be implemented by designated personnel following CDC guidelines once sick employee leaves.

❑ All close contacts to a positive case who are **not fully vaccinated** should quarantine.
❑ Per CDC guidelines, individuals should remain in quarantine for up to 14 days after last exposure, assuming they do not become symptomatic or test positive. If they do become symptomatic or test positive, they should follow the isolation criteria above.
  ○ For more information about quarantining and alternative options to shorten quarantine period please visit NCDHHS Quarantine Guidance and consult with your local health department.
❑ Quarantine is not required after close contact for:
  ○ People who are **fully vaccinated and do not have symptoms.** People who are fully vaccinated and have been exposed to COVID-19 should get tested 3-5 days after exposures and wear a mask in public indoor settings for 14 days after last exposure or until they receive a negative test result.
  ○ People who have **tested positive for COVID-19 within the past 3 months and recovered and do not have symptoms**.
❑ People who are **not fully vaccinated and have tested antibody positive within 3 months before or immediately following a close contact** may not need to quarantine IF they have limited or no contact with people at high risk for severe COVID-19 illness, including older adults and those with certain medical conditions. Since this may be difficult or impossible to assess, NCDHHS generally recommends that individuals who do not meet the two exceptions listed above should still quarantine after a close contact even if they tested antibody positive. Exemption from quarantine based on a recent positive antibody test can be considered on a case-by-case if approved by the local public health department.
❑ Notify local health authorities of confirmed COVID-19 cases and coordinate with them regarding control measures, including isolation and quarantine.
❑ Provide employees with information on help lines to access information or other support in reference to COVID-19, e.g. 211 and Hope4NC Helpline (1-855-587-3463).

Businesses can consider:

❑ Conducting a daily symptom screening (standard interview questionnaire (English|Spanish) of employees at entrance to workplace with immediately sending symptomatic workers home to isolate.

Cleaning and Hygiene
Washing hands with soap and water for 20 seconds or using hand sanitizer reduces the spread of transmission.

Businesses are recommended to:

❑ Clean surfaces once a day, prioritizing high-touch surfaces. If there has been a sick person or someone who tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 24 hours, clean and disinfect the space using an EPA-approved disinfectant for SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19).
❑ Provide alcohol-based hand sanitizer (with at least 60% alcohol) at the entrance, and any other areas throughout premises as needed.

❑ Systematically and frequently check and refill hand sanitizers throughout the day or event and assure soap and hand drying materials are available at all sinks.

Combatting Misinformation

Help make sure that the information your employees is getting is coming directly from reliable resources. Use resources from a trusted source like the CDC or NCDHHS to promote behaviors that prevent the spread of COVID-19.

It is recommended that businesses:

❑ Provide workers with education about COVID-19 strategies, using methods like videos, webinars, or FAQs. Some reliable sources include NC DHHS COVID-19, Know Your W's: Wear, Wait, Wash, NC DHHS COVID-19 Latest Updates, NC DHHS COVID-19 Materials & Resources
❑ Promote informational helplines like 211 and Hope4NC and other Wellness Resources.
❑ Put up signs and posters, such those found in Social Media Toolkit for COVID-19.

Additional Resources
- NC DHHS: North Carolina COVID-19
- CDC: Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers
- CDC: Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility
- CDC: Reopening Guidance
- EPA: Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2
- FDA: Food Safety and the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)
- HHS/OSHA: Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19