

**August 13, 2020**

## **Negative COVID-19 laboratory test not required for return to work or school**

MOBILE, Alabama — Because of the ever-evolving study of COVID-19, recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) continue to be refined regarding isolation and quarantine. Researchers have reported that people with mild to moderate COVID-19 infections remain contagious no longer than 10 days after symptoms began.

The Mobile County Health Department (MCHD) is requesting assistance from the community in adopting these changes to allow people to return to work and school as soon as safely possible and to reduce the burden of inappropriate testing.

For COVID-19 positive patients, a test-based strategy is no longer recommended to determine when to discontinue home isolation, except in rare circumstances (\*). Instead, a symptom-based or time-based strategy should be used.

Symptom-based strategy:

- Must be isolated for at least 10 days (\*) after symptoms first appeared, and
- At least 24 hours have passed since last fever (without the use of fever-reducing medications), and
- Symptoms (#) have improved.

Time-based strategy:

- Must be isolated 10 days after specimen collection.

People exposed to COVID-19 must quarantine at home for 14 days. Test results cannot shorten the 14 days. Testing is not recommended unless the person develops symptoms of COVID-19. People who are awaiting test results for COVID-19 should also remain at home until they receive results and guidance from their physician, health care provider, or the health department. Having a negative test does not eliminate the requirement for home quarantine when people are close contacts to a COVID-19 positive case or remain symptomatic without another diagnosis.

According to a statement from ADPH on August 7, retesting to obtain negative results -- after recovering from COVID-19 -- is not recommended for return to work or school after a person recovers from COVID-19 and has followed the recommended isolation/quarantine guidelines. For more information, please visit <https://www.alabamapublichealth.gov/news/2020/08/07.html>.

*\* Severely immunocompromised or persons with severe illness may be infectious beyond the 10 days and should isolate for at least 20 days. For these individuals, to end isolation early, 2 negative PCR test results, collected more than 24 hours apart may be used.*

*# Symptoms may include any of the following: cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, new olfactory disorder, new taste disorder, fever (measured or subjective), chills, rigors, myalgia, headache, sore throat, nausea/vomiting, diarrhea, fatigue, or congestion/runny nose.*