

# Holiday COVID Updates: CDC Shortens Quarantine Periods; SCOTUS to Hear Vaccine Cases Jan. 7

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## CDC shortens quarantine, isolation periods

On December 27, the CDC issued new guidance on isolation and quarantine as cases of the Omicron variant soared nationwide over Christmas weekend. The two categories relate to different circumstances: isolation is for individuals who test positive for the virus, while quarantining applies following a known exposure to COVID-19. A full breakdown is available on the CDC's website at [CDC Online Newsroom](#).

The new guidance provides that the isolation period following a positive test is now 5 days, followed by an additional 5 days of wearing a mask when around others (if asymptomatic). If exposed to the virus, the recommended quarantine period is 5 days followed by strict mask use for individuals who are either unvaccinated or have not received a booster shot. Those who have received a booster shot should wear a mask for 10 days after the exposure, but do not need to quarantine.

In reducing the quarantine and isolation period, the CDC considered the altered transmissibility of the Omicron variant, which tends to be more contagious earlier in the course of illness than the original or Delta variants of the virus. The removal of a quarantine period for those who have received booster shots also indicates the high effectiveness of that vaccine. While this recommendation is not a mandate, employers should take note and update their policies on interoffice exposure, contact tracing, and required isolation of employees accordingly.

## Status of the ETS issued by the Department of Labor regarding mandatory vaccination

The Supreme Court announced on December 22 that it would hear oral arguments in cases determining the fates of two government vaccine rules. The first, the [healthcare worker vaccine mandate](#) issued by the Department of Health and Human Services, was subject to injunctions out of Missouri and Louisiana courts. The second, the [OSHA emergency rule](#) requiring employees to either be vaccinated or undergo weekly testing, was put back into place by the Sixth Circuit just last week, after the rule was temporarily stayed by the Fifth Circuit.

Both lower court decisions were quickly challenged by activist groups, businesses, religious organizations, and individuals, arguing the rules were either valid or invalid. The two cases remain separate, but oral argument is set for the same day, January 7. Until then, the healthcare worker mandate remains blocked in about half of states, and the OSHA rule is actively in effect. That rule requires employers to comply by implementing policies by January 10, so employers should still prepare in case the rule is upheld.

Once arguments are held, the Court will likely issue an opinion quickly due to the emergency nature of the rules and the recent uptick in cases.

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*If you have questions about the OSHA vaccine rule, CDC guidance on COVID-19, or need help implementing policies related to either, contact McGlinchey's [Labor & Employment](#) team.*

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