



From testing to treatment: how to prepare for the next phase of COVID

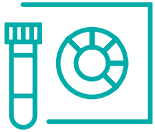
It's been over two years since the start of the pandemic, but thankfully things are starting to look up in the fight against COVID-19. While progress has been substantial, we're not out of the woods yet. COVID-19 related [hospitalizations are still high](#), which means we should continue to use the tools available to us to prevent future outbreaks.

Color has been at the forefront of [large-scale COVID-19 testing and vaccination](#) programs since the beginning of the pandemic, and we've watched the landscape evolve over the past two years. From this vantage point, we anticipate that the following trends in testing, vaccination and therapeutics will gain traction over the next several months.



Changes in testing strategies

For many organizations, weekly or biweekly testing was essential, to keep their populations safe and healthy. However, as vaccination rates get high and the majority of people return to normal in-person activities such as work and school, we foresee a shift from proactive testing to symptomatic testing. Some of these emerging strategies may include:



- **Regular testing for unvaccinated individuals**

The [CDC](#) and [AMA](#) found that unvaccinated individuals are 3-5 times more likely to contract COVID-19. Which is why employers with lower vaccination rates will benefit from continuing to implement a weekly surveillance testing program for their unvaccinated employees to stop workplace outbreaks before they spread. Employers can successfully implement this by collecting employee vaccination status, setting a weekly testing cadence for unvaccinated employees with regular reminders, and tracking compliance as well as test results.



- **Symptomatic or exposed testing**

Within vaccinated workforces, testing can focus on employees either exposed to an individual with a confirmed COVID-19 case or for someone who may become symptomatic. As a result, employers may opt to set up testing that can be conducted on an as-needed basis. Employers should make sure employees have the flexibility to access and report tests at home or at work. As such, the ability to self-report, upload their test results, and order kits to be delivered to an employee's home can help successfully implement this program.



- **Proactive testing for events**

Before bringing back large numbers of employees, whether it be for a corporate event or simply a large-scale gathering, a best practice is to ask employees to complete pre-arrival testing, to reduce the chance of introducing a case on-site. This can be supplemented with other safety measures and protocols that can ensure end-to-end event safety. This type of program is achieved by providing pre-event at-home testing, enabling attendees to self-report test results with photo upload, and by setting up an onsite rapid testing program during the event.



- **Extending testing to dependents**

Companies are recognizing the importance of speedy and easy access to COVID-19 testing when needed, and have as such extend the access to COVID-19 testing to employees' dependents. A common set up includes the ability for an employee's dependent to order tests delivered to their home, with a cap on the number of tests allowed in a certain time period, as well as the number of eligible dependents. Tests results in those instances are not shared with the employer.



Additional booster requirements are changing what it means to be fully vaccinated

As our [Omicron Outbreak modeling tool](#) has demonstrated, vaccines and boosters are a major factor in reducing the chance of an outbreak in a given population. The CDC has recently approved a second booster dose, and companies are continuously revising their fully vaccinated requirements to align them with evolving recommendations. For many, having received at least one booster has become part of the requirements to be considered fully vaccinated. Clear and proactive communications regarding any vaccination policy changes, as well as the ability to continuously track changes in vaccination status will be critical for companies.



Availability of therapeutics

Recent treatments for COVID-19 infections have shown promise. Antiviral drugs such as Paxlovid, which has received Emergency Use Authorization by the FDA, can be used to prevent severe outcomes, although they must be administered early to be effective. This will require a patient who receives a COVID-19 diagnosis to easily and quickly discuss their eligibility for treatment with a physician, receive a prescription for treatment if they are eligible, locate a pharmacy with available supply, and have their medication picked up or delivered promptly. Employers can play a key role in making sure their employees have access to clinical consultation and prescription delivery. As we continue to learn more about COVID-19, its treatment and its prevention, protocols around testing, vaccinations and the use of therapeutics will continue to evolve.

References

1. [Our World in Data. Number of COVID-19 patients in hospital. Accessed March 31, 2022.](#)
2. [Centers for Disease Controls. New CDC Study: Vaccination Offers Higher Protection than Previous COVID-19 Infection. Published October 29, 2021. Accessed March 31, 2022.](#)
3. [American Hospital Association. CDC: Unvaccinated adults 3-5 times more likely to get omicron infection. Published January 21, 2022. Accessed March 31, 2022.](#)



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About Color

Color can provide the end-to-end support needed to set up any testing strategy to suit the unique needs of your company and has already helped hundreds of businesses and large institutions implement simple, effective COVID-19 testing, antiviral treatment and vaccination programs. Learn more about how Color can [help employers](#) track vaccination status to help inform different testing protocols and can support quick and fast access to antiviral therapy to maintain compliance and business continuity.