OPTUM®

Return
Better

As variants surge, is it best to test?

COVID-19 testing can play an important role in your organization's response strategy.
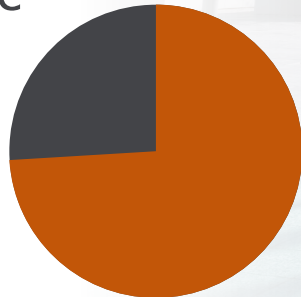
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COVID-19 and returning to a safe workplace

According to a LaSalle Network survey in May 2021, 74% of employers indicated they would be bringing employees back to the office in Fall 2021.

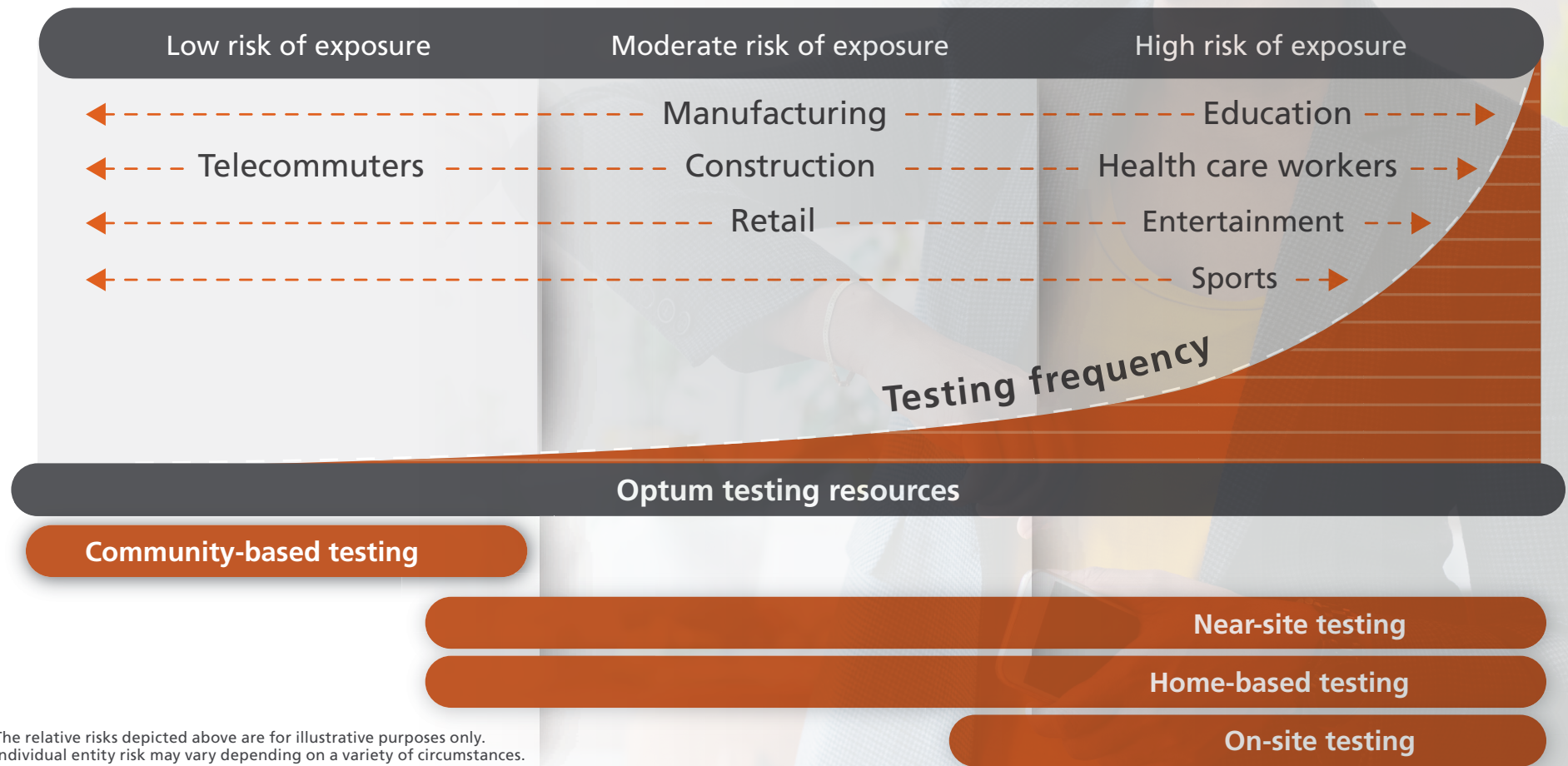However, the majority of these employers indicated it would be a phased re-entry.[1]
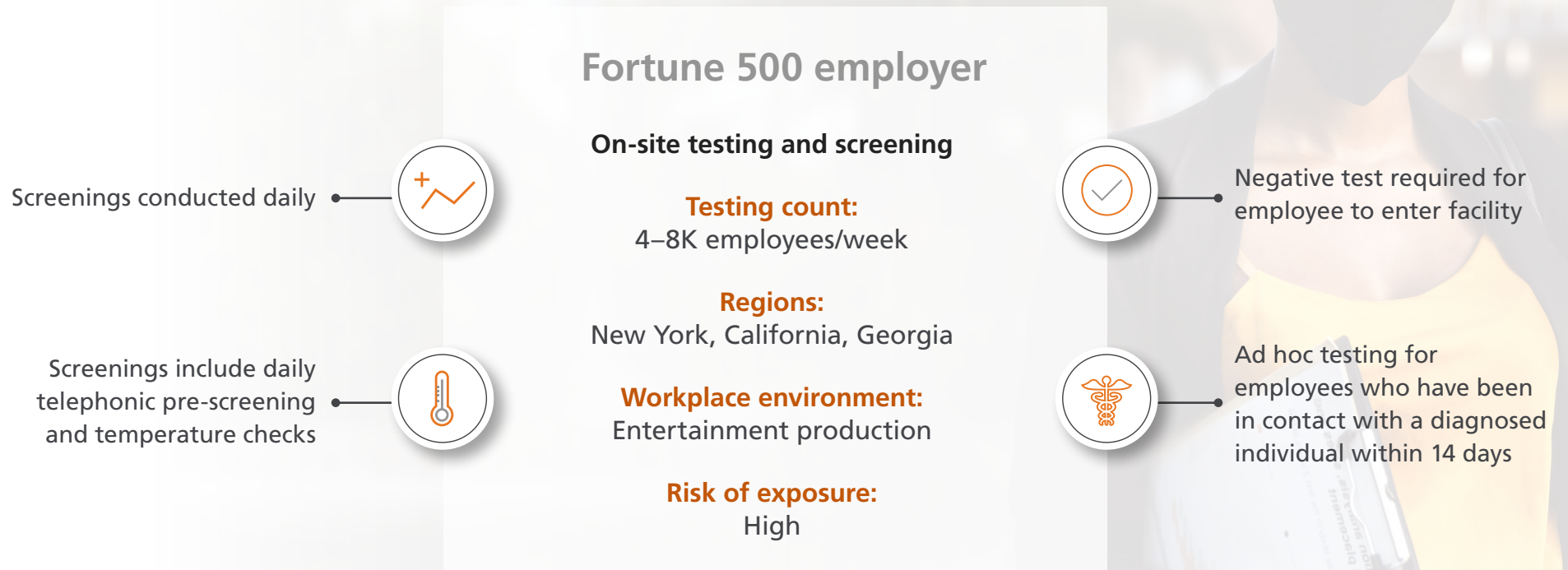
Stay remote
26%

Return to office
74%

The **testing continuum**

The risk of exposure varies by industry

Low risk of exposure	Moderate risk of exposure	High risk of exposure
	Manufacturing	Education
Telecommuters	Construction	Health care workers
	Retail	Entertainment
		Sports

Testing frequency

Optum testing resources

Community-based testing

Near-site testing

Home-based testing

On-site testing

The relative risks depicted above are for illustrative purposes only.
Individual entity risk may vary depending on a variety of circumstances.

Reason for testing:
Physical distancing is not possible

Fortune 500 employer

Screenings conducted daily

Screenings include daily telephonic pre-screening and temperature checks

On-site testing and screening

Testing count:
4–8K employees/week

Regions:
New York, California, Georgia

Workplace environment:
Entertainment production

Risk of exposure:
High

Negative test required for employee to enter facility

Ad hoc testing for employees who have been in contact with a diagnosed individual within 14 days

Reason for testing: Physical distancing is not possible, community infections are high or increasing, and vaccination rates are low

Employees returned in a phased process

Deployed testing for phase 1 within 30 days of initial discussion

Negative test required for employee to return to worksite

Large employer

On-site testing and screening

Testing count:
~437 tests/day across four locations

Regions:
Ohio, Iowa, Texas, Arizona

Workplace environment:
Field workers and call centers

Risk of exposure:
High

Real-time data provided to employer from Optum data platform

Employer has field staff who are easily exposed

Employer has call centers of essential workers in COVID-19 hot-spot areas

Reason for symptom checking only

For the specific population segment where physical distancing is possible, high-risk individuals work from home and there is low virus exposure, high vaccination rates and mild community infections.

Fortune 100 employer

Symptom checker

Daily symptom checks completed digitally

Must have no reported symptoms for two weeks to enter the worksite

Testing count:
~300K

Regions:
U.S. nationwide

Workplace environment:
Corporate offices

Risk of exposure:
Low

Employees returned in a phased approach

Physical distancing measures implemented on site

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COVID-19 testing and screening resources

Keep your critical workforce working, healthy and with peace of mind. COVID-19 testing and screening resources benefit employers, employees and families.

On-site temperature screenings

Conducted as employees, contractors and visitors enter the worksite to mitigate health risks

Screenings include:

A **temperature check** for fever

A **verbal survey** of potential symptoms or possible virus contact

Employees arrive at the worksite and are guided through the **screening process.**

Screener **verbally completes short survey** with individuals to address potential symptoms of COVID-19 or recent contact with an individual who has been diagnosed with the virus.

If risk detected, next steps are **dictated by company policy.**

Optum clinical screener is stationed at each worksite entrance where employees are **required to have a screening conducted prior to entering the facility.**

After completion of survey, **employee temperature is taken** via a non-touch temporal scanner by the clinical screener and recorded.

If no risk detected, **employee proceeds into the facility.**

On-site COVID-19 testing

Testing employees on site for COVID-19 before returning to the workplace

Testing includes:

- Logistics and technology
- Staffing, including providers
- Laboratory results and employee outreach

Pre-event
Patient schedules an appointment online for one of the testing event locations. A release is signed by the employee during pre-registration or at the testing event.

Post-event: Results and outreach
Optum receives results from labs. Optum nursing staff reaches out to patients testing positive for COVID-19 to provide follow-up clinical advice and care instructions.

Event: Providers complete services
Health care providers perform services at testing event, send specimens to labs and document patient demographics in Optum secure portal.

Post-event: Client reporting
Optum posts all data to client portal.

This service is subject to availability. Minimum testing total requirements are in place.

At-home COVID-19 testing*

Helps address distributed populations, test symptomatic employees with little or no exposure to others and assess fitness for work after a positive test

Testing is intended for both symptomatic and asymptomatic individuals

Easy-to-follow collection instructions

Convenient overnight shipping option

Timely lab results communicated within 24–48 hours

Integrated clinical support for positive results

Order collection kit
multiple distribution options available including employee-facing, cuztomized online portals.

Sample collection
Participant self-collects and sample with short nasal swab.

Results
Participant receives results online 24–48 hours after the sample arrives at the lab.

Reporting
Participant and employer receive results. Positive results automatically reported to mandated local and federal reporting agencies.

Ship collection kit
Collection kit is shipped overnight directly to the participant.

Return shipping
Sample ships overnight to a CLIA-certified lab.**

Telehealth
Virtual consultations with board-certified clinicians for participants with positive results regarding next steps.

* Subject to availability. State restrictions may apply and are subject to change without notice.
** Samples cannot be returned to the lab on weekend days.

Perspectives on screening and testing

Virus testing approaches will vary by:

- Industry

- Composition of workforce

- Worksite situations and environments

- Virus exposure, vaccination rates and community infection levels

The return-to-workplace strategy requires a comprehensive phased approach with foundational and sustainable resources.

When COVID-19 testing is a chosen solution, consider both on-site and at-home testing options.

Optum return-to-workplace approach

From ensuring workplace safety to addressing benefit cost increases from care deferral and increased mental health needs, the COVID-19 pandemic has ushered in a host of new challenges. All of this is happening while the workplace is redefined to accommodate modern employee needs with more flexibility in where and how they work.

Driven by a customer-first mindset and informed by both data insights and clinical expertise, Optum® Return Better™ offers customizable solutions for employers to confidently safeguard, re-engage and build resilience among their post-pandemic workforce.

Return
Better

As variants surge, is it best to test? COVID-19 can play an important role in your organization's response strategy.

Frequently asked questions

COVID-19 screening vs. testing

What is the difference between screening and testing?

COVID-19 screening is a process to assess individuals for the presence of symptoms. For example, you may be asked if you have experienced a fever or cough or have your temperature taken. A diagnosis is not made through screening. Individuals who screen positive are generally referred for testing.

Fundamentals of testing

What are the different types of COVID-19 testing?

There are two different types of tests: diagnostic tests and antibody tests.
A diagnostic test can show if you have an active coronavirus infection and should take steps to quarantine or isolate yourself from others.

Currently there are two types of diagnostic tests:

- Molecular tests, such as RT-PCR tests, detect the virus's genetic material
- Antigen tests detect specific proteins from the virus

An antibody test looks for antibodies that are made by your immune system in response to a threat, such as a specific virus. Antibodies can help fight infections. Antibodies can take several days or weeks to develop after you have an infection and may stay in your blood for several weeks or more after recovery. Because of this, antibody tests should not be used to diagnose COVID-19. Researchers do not know if the presence of antibodies means that you are immune to COVID-19 in the future.[2]

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Frequently asked questions

How and where are diagnostic tests performed?

Diagnostic tests are now available with alternative methods and benefits. Rapid, point-of-care diagnostic tests use a mucus sample from the nose or throat. They can be analyzed at the doctor's office or clinic where the sample is collected, and results may be available in minutes. These may be molecular or antigen tests.

Combination tests can test for the flu and the coronavirus at the same time. Some can test for many different types of respiratory viruses, including the one that causes COVID-19.

At-home collection tests, available only by prescription from a doctor, allow the patient to collect the sample at home and send it directly to the lab for analysis. Some at-home collection tests have a health care provider oversee the sample collection by video with the patient. Home-collect tests are sent to a reference laboratory for testing. Results may take several days.

Saliva tests allow a patient to spit into a tube rather than get their nose or throat swabbed. Saliva tests are collected from a patient and sent to a reference laboratory for testing. Results may take several days.[3]

How long does it take to get test results?

Results may vary by vendor and testing labs. For testing solutions provided by Optum, service-level contract agreements are in place to provide 24- to 48-hour results for COVID-19 worksite and at-home testing options. Other vendors may send samples away to a lab where results are typically available in three to five days.

Does the PCR test use a mid-nasal swab or full nasal swab?

Our standard PCR-based sampling method uses a mid-nasal swab.

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Frequently asked questions

Is there a quick test (e.g., 45 minutes) for an active case?

Yes, there are point-of-care devices available that can provide rapid results for symptomatic patients. We recommend testing symptomatic patients in a clinical setting, such as an established in-house clinic, provider facility or community-based testing site.

How can saliva-based rapid tests be deployed to supplement a return-to-worksite strategy?

Unfortunately, testing saliva for COVID-19 has not been studied enough to know if it is reliable in finding the virus causing COVID-19. This includes the SalivaDirect test developed at the Yale School of Public Health to test persons suspected of having COVID-19.[4] Optum follows the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines recommending testing via a nasal or throat swab.

Availability and implementation

Are the testing results provided to both the employee and the employer?
Are there any concerns about HIPAA?

The testing process includes a release of information that permits the testing laboratory to share results with the employer sponsoring the program. The release also states that information is provided to the employer. The employee's authorization to release information is required in order to receive testing services. Appropriate administrative, technical and physical safeguards have been implemented to prevent unintended disclosure. If health plans or providers become part of this process, requiring HIPAA compliance, the supporting infrastructure and applications are managed by a HIPAA-compliant HITRUST-certified data center. All exchanges of information related to the processing of the sample and release of results are transmitted via encrypted application program interfaces. Customer data is encrypted in transit and at rest.

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Frequently asked questions

Do you work with globally disbursed companies or only companies in the U.S.?

In general, Optum works with many clients that are distributed across the global landscape. Programs that we offer on a global basis (e.g., Employee Assistance Programs) that can be part of a broader strategy are in scope for organizations that are globally disbursed. However, currently our solutions that are specially designed for return to work that require on-site or at-home testing, temperature screening, and other like services are intended to support employers in the U.S. market.

Does Optum offer an at-home COVID-19 test for remote workers?

Optum offers an at-home COVID-19 polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test that detects the genetic information of the virus through a small specimen collected from the individual. A positive result will occur if the individual is actively infected and the virus is present at the time the specimen is collected. There is a possibility of false positives and false negatives when using PCR testing.

More information

Where can I learn more about COVID-19 testing?

Visit the Optum COVID-19 testing page to learn more about testing resources and how Optum can tailor a program to meet your needs.

Contact your Optum Client Services Manager or call 1-866-386-3404.

Resources

1. LaSalle Network. *Office Re-entry Index Volume II.* thelasallenetwork.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Re-Entry-Index-Volume-II.pdf. July 2021. Accessed August 16, 2021.

2. FDA. *Coronavirus disease 2019 testing basics.* fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/coronavirus-disease-2019-testing-basics. Updated November 6, 2020. Accessed August 16, 2021.

3. Ibid.

4. Yale School of Medicine. *SalivaDirect: What you need to know about the new COVID-19 test.* medicine.yale.edu/news-article/27120/. September 3, 2020. Accessed August 16, 2021.

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