

Healthcare Personnel (HCP) with COVID-19 Exposures or COVID-19–Like Illness

March 17, 2020

Background

On March 16, 2020, New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) released guidance on how to safely return healthcare personnel (HCP) who are on home isolation or quarantine back to work. NYSDOH does not recommend home quarantine for asymptomatic HCP with exposures because:

- 1) in the setting of widespread community transmission, all HCP are at some risk for exposure to COVID-19, whether in the workplace or in the community; and
- 2) it is impractical to quarantine all asymptomatic HCP with an exposure due to depletion of the critical healthcare workforce.

Based on this guidance, **Infection Prevention & Control (IP&C) and Workforce Health & Safety (WH&S) have developed a process to allow HCP to safely return to work.** Please see below for the new process.

COVID-19–Like Illness Symptoms: fever ($\geq 100^{\circ}\text{F}$ or 37.8°C), cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, body aches, fatigue, runny nose/congestion OR diarrhea*

**Note: for HCP, the signs and symptoms described in this guidance are broader than those described when assessing exposures for patients/individuals not working in healthcare.*

For ALL HCP (regardless of known COVID-19 exposure):

- All HCP must self-monitor for symptoms (see above).
- HCP must not work sick.
- All symptoms, however mild, should be considered as possibly due to COVID-19.
- If experiencing symptoms, stay home and call WH&S. (See “Instructions for Symptomatic HCP” below.)

HCP currently on home quarantine due to known COVID-19 exposures:

- You will be contacted individually by WH&S who will confirm that you have no symptoms and have not been diagnosed with COVID-19.
- After you have been contacted and cleared by WH&S, you may return to work **wearing a surgical face mask** for 14 days after your last exposure (see “Masking Instructions” below).
- You must self-monitor your temperature and symptoms at the start of each shift and at least every 12 hours for 14 days after your last exposure.

HCP currently at home with confirmed or suspected COVID-19:

- Once 7 days have elapsed, you will be contacted by WH&S to confirm that you are fever-free for 72 hours with improving symptoms.
- After you have been contacted and cleared by WH&S, you may return to work **wearing a surgical face mask daily** for 14 days after your symptoms began (see “Masking Instructions” below).

HCP who have exposures to COVID-19 in the community or workplace:

- HCP with an exposure to a patient or staff member with presumed or confirmed COVID-19 should notify their supervisor and WH&S.
 - **Exposure** is defined as having prolonged close contact (greater than 10 minutes and <6 feet away) with a person with presumed or confirmed COVID-19, and neither the HCP nor person was wearing a surgical facemask OR HCP was NOT wearing a facemask and eye protection while present for an aerosol-generating procedure performed on a COVID-19 person.
- If NO symptoms (see above), **don a surgical facemask** and continue usual work activities (see “Masking Instructions” below).
- Self-monitor for any fever (≥ 100 degrees F) and any symptoms (see above) before every shift and twice a day. If any of these symptoms develop, follow instructions outlined below in “Instructions for Symptomatic HCP.”

Instructions for symptomatic HCP:

- If HCP develop symptoms (see above) at work, they should immediately STOP WORKING, notify their supervisor and WH&S, self-isolate in a room, and don a mask if available.
- If HCP develop symptoms at home, they should stay home, notify their supervisor and WH&S.
- Testing will be performed based on current capacity of laboratories and specimen collection kits.
- HCP with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 will be asked to self-isolate at home for at least 7 days after symptom onset. HCP can return to work if fever-free for 72 hours without antipyretic and otherwise improving, with approval by WH&S.
 - A SURGICAL MASK must be worn until 14 days after symptom onset (see “Masking Instructions” below).
- Note: HCP diagnosed with a non-COVID-19 respiratory virus will follow standard WH&S protocols of home isolation until symptoms improve, fever-free for 24 hours, and can return to work restriction-free (no mask required).

Masking Instructions for HCP exposed or suspected/confirmed to have COVID-19:

- Once cleared by WH&S, HCP may return to work as above.
- A SURGICAL FACEMASK must be worn until 14 days after last exposure (exposed) or 14 days after symptom onset (suspected/confirmed and improving)
- Mask must be donned when entering the workplace.
- Mask must be worn while around patients or other HCPs while at work.
 - The same mask may be worn throughout the entire shift and should only be replaced if soiled or wet.
- Eye protection is not needed unless worn as part of PPE for patient on droplet precautions.
- Mask may be removed after leaving the workplace.

References and Resources:

- NYP Infonet. [Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) webpage](#)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). [Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)
- New York City Department of Health. [2019 Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- New York State Department of Health. [Novel Coronavirus Information for Providers](#)
- World Health Organization. [Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#)