



Health Care Worker (HCW) COVID-19 FAQs

1. When can a mildly symptomatic HCW wear a surgical mask in the workplace for their own health condition?

If a HCW has only mild upper respiratory symptoms (e.g., no cough, fever, shortness of breath or flu-like symptoms) and 7 days have passed since symptom onset, they may wear a surgical facemask as directed by Employee Occupational Health and Wellness (EOHW) for all patient encounters and while in shared workspaces with other HCW (e.g., physician workrooms). They should also practice frequent hand hygiene. (When testing becomes more widely available, HCWs with mild upper respiratory tract infection symptoms will be tested.)

2. Can a HCW be at work if living in the same household as a Person Under Investigation (PUI)?

No: The HCW is excluded from work and must self-isolate until the PUI COVID-19 result tests negative. If the COVID-19 test result is positive, then the HCW will be required to self-isolate for a period of time that will be determined depending on circumstances of COVID-19 confirmed case status and ability to self-isolate. The HCW must have clearance from EOHW to return to work.

3. A HCW has been excluded from work due to a household contact who was a Person Under Investigation (PUI), but this household contact has since tested negative for COVID-19. Can this HCW return to work?

Yes: Once an individual has been ruled out from COVID-19 infection, they are no longer considered a PUI. The asymptomatic HCW may return to work. However, symptom self-monitoring and vigilant hand hygiene should be encouraged in case the HCW has been exposed to other transmissible pathogens.

4. Should HCWs be excluded from work if an asymptomatic member of their household is on quarantine after travel to a Level 3 country?

No: HCWs do not need to be excluded if their only contact is with asymptomatic individuals, even after travel to high-risk areas.

5. Should HCWs be excluded from work if they have been in local public places (e.g., stores, places of worship, schools) in a community where COVID-19 cases have been identified?

No: Exposures in community settings are considered low risk, even when one has been in the same room (e.g., waiting room or store) with a symptomatic person with COVID-19 as long as the HCW did not come in close contact with the confirmed COVID-19 case. It is not considered an exposure if a HCW has been in the same room where a symptomatic individual with COVID-19 has previously been.

6. What is close contact with a person confirmed to have COVID-19?

Per the CDC, close contact means being within 6 feet of a COVID-19 case for a prolonged period of time (a minimum of 10 minutes or more, per CDC guidelines) or having direct contact with infectious secretions of a COVID-19 case (e.g., being coughed on). In a health care setting, medium- or high-risk contacts include contact with a COVID-19-positive patient without wearing a surgical facemask, or performing aerosol-generating procedures (e.g., intubation, extubation, bronchoscopy, sputum induction, or CPR) without wearing a respirator. All household contacts with COVID-19 cases are considered medium or high risk.

7. Should an asymptomatic HCW with a household contact with confirmed COVID-19 be allowed to remain at work if they wear surgical facemasks or other?

No: HCWs in this situation must self-isolate at home for at least 14 days. They are regarded as having a medium- or high-risk exposure.

8. Can a HCW remain at work if they had a medium- or high-risk contact with a patient who at a later date became a PUI?

Yes: The asymptomatic HCW can remain at work until the PUI's COVID-19 test result is available.

9. Will a HCW who has had contact with a patient who tests positive for COVID-19 be informed of the result?

Yes: When a patient's COVID-19 test is positive, EOHW will contact each HCW who had contact with the patient and assess exposure risk. HCWs who had close contact will be required to monitor symptoms. If there was a break in practice utilizing PPE or another unanticipated potential exposure event, then the HCW will be required to self-isolate for up to 14 days.