

## Return to Work Guidance for Healthcare Workers (HCWs) and First Responders (FRs) Who Have Confirmed COVID-19 or Are Asymptomatic with High or Medium Risk Exposures\* to a Known Case of COVID-19

### Healthcare Workers and First Responders with Confirmed COVID-19

- If **symptomatic**, HCWs and FRs should not return to work until:
  - At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since recovery defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications **and** improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); **and**,
  - At least 7 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.
- If **asymptomatic**, HCWs and FRs, facilities should consult with their local health jurisdiction (LHJ) for guidance on when it may be appropriate for HCW to work. The HCW should not return to work until:
  - At least 7 days from the date on which their positive test was collected. The HCW should self-monitor for symptoms, and seek re-evaluation from occupational health immediately if respiratory symptoms begin.
- **Symptomatic** and **asymptomatic** HCWs and FRs who have tested positive for COVID-19 can return to work provided they meet the appropriate criteria above **AND**:
  - Adhere to respiratory hygiene, hand hygiene, and cough etiquette **AND**

#### Symptomatic HCW:

- Wear a facemask at all times while in the healthcare facility, if there is a sufficient supply of facemasks until all symptoms are completely resolved or until 14 days after illness onset, whichever is longer.
- Be restricted from contact with severely immunocompromised patients (e.g., transplant, hematology-oncology) until all symptoms are completely resolved or until 14 days after illness onset, whichever is longer

#### Asymptomatic HCW:

- Wear a facemask at all times while in the healthcare facility, if there is a sufficient supply of facemasks, until until 14 days from the date on which their positive test was collected.
- Be restricted from contact with severely immunocompromised patients (e.g., transplant, hematology-oncology) until 14 days from the date on which their positive test was collected.

Some HCWs and FRs may experience prolonged cough as a result of respiratory viral infection, which may continue after isolation has ended. Such persons can be advised to wear a surgical mask or equivalent until their cough resolves or their health returns to baseline status.

Alternatively, **Symptomatic HCWs with confirmed COVID-19 infection can have isolation discontinued and return to work based on the following:**

- Resolution of fever, without use of antipyretic medication
- Improvement in illness signs and symptoms
- Negative results of a molecular assay for COVID-19 from at least two consecutive NP swab specimens collected  $\geq 24$  hours apart.

## Asymptomatic HCWs and FRs with High or Medium Risk Exposures\* to a known case of COVID-19

Ideally, HCWs and FRs with high or medium risk exposures should be excluded from work for 14 days from the last exposure. After other staffing options have been exhausted and in consultation with their occupational health program and the local health jurisdiction, facilities can consider allowing asymptomatic HCW who have had high or medium risk exposure to continue working with these provisions:

- HCWs and FRs should actively monitor for symptoms consistent with COVID-19 infection but can return to work provided they:
  - Adhere to cough etiquette and hand hygiene
  - Wear a facemask at all times while in the healthcare facility, if there is a sufficient supply of facemasks, until 14-days after the date of exposure.
- If symptoms develop during the monitoring period:
  - If HCWs and FRs develop fever (measured temperature  $> 100.4^{\circ}$  or subjective fever) or respiratory symptoms consistent with COVID-19, they must cease patient care activities, immediately self-isolate (separate themselves from others), don a facemask (if not already wearing), and notify their supervisor or occupational health services promptly so they can coordinate consultation and referral to a healthcare provider for further evaluation.
  - Testing for COVID-19 should be performed, if available. (If testing not available, follow guidance above for infected HCWs.)
    - If positive, refer to guidance above for infected HCWs.
    - If negative, they can return to work under the following conditions:

- Symptoms have resolved.
- It has been at least 24 hours since the fever has gone without use of fever-reducing medications (for persons who develop fever).
- They should wear a facemask at all times while in the healthcare facility, if there is a sufficient supply of facemasks, until 14-days after the date of exposure. (If new symptoms arise during the 14-day monitoring period retesting is indicated as above.)

**\*For more information** on evaluation of HCWs diagnosed with or exposed to COVID-19 please see the following guidance from CDC: [Interim U.S. Guidance for Risk Assessment and Public Health Management of Healthcare Personnel with Potential Exposure in a Healthcare Setting to Patients with Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\)](#)

## More COVID-19 Information and Resources

Stay up-to-date on the [current COVID-19 situation in Washington](#), [Governor Inslee's proclamations](#), [symptoms](#), [how it spreads](#), and [how and when people should get tested](#). See our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) for more information.

The risk of COVID-19 is not connected to race, ethnicity or nationality. [Stigma will not help to fight the illness](#). Share accurate information with others to keep rumors and misinformation from spreading.

- [WA State Department of Health 2019 Novel Coronavirus Outbreak \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [WA State Coronavirus Response \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Find Your Local Health Department or District](#)
- [CDC Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Stigma Reduction Resources](#)

**Have more questions about COVID-19?** Call our hotline: **1-800-525-0127**. For interpretative services, **press #** when they answer and **say your language**. (Open from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m.) For questions about your own health, COVID-19 testing, or testing results, please contact your health care provider.