

May 6, 2020

## Health Care Worker Self Isolation and Return to Work Guidelines

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### Criteria for Discharging from Isolation and Considering Case Resolved:

As per the [Ministry of Health Quick Reference for Testing and Clearance](#), individuals should be in isolation for the duration specified and released provided the individual is afebrile and symptoms are improving. *Absence of cough is not required for those known to have a chronic cough or who are experiencing reactive airways post-infection.*

### Health Care Worker (HCW) Self Isolation and Return to Work (RTW) Recommendations:

Hastings Prince Edward Public Health (HPEPH) supports health care organizations making their own assessment and decisions regarding critical staffing needs. We are not able to advise on critical staffing needs for other healthcare settings and recommend HCWs report to their Occupational Health (OH) for direction.

- **Symptomatic HCWs should be tested for COVID-19 as per [Provincial Testing Guidance](#)**
- Symptomatic HCWs awaiting testing results must be off work
- Asymptomatic HCWs awaiting testing results may continue to work using appropriate precautions recommended by the facility, dependant on the reason for testing
- **In exceptional circumstances, if a staff person is deemed critical to operations by the organization, the following HCW specific criteria for earlier RTW with work-self-isolation should be followed, recognizing the staff may still be infectious**

**\*Work-self-isolation means staff person must remain self-isolated in home while not at work, and follow specific criteria while at work, for timeframe specified (14 days from symptom onset/positive specimen collection date/exposure date):**

- Twice daily temperature checks
- Travel to and from work in your private vehicle. If you have to take transit, wear a surgical/procedure mask and perform hand hygiene before and after your travel to work
- While at work, adhere to universal masking recommendations, meticulous hand hygiene and physical distancing except when providing direct care
- Be cohorted to provide care for COVID-19 positive patients/residents if possible
- Do not eat your meals in a shared space (e.g., conference room, lunch room) with other HCWs
- Should not work in multiple locations
- Self-isolate at home when outside of the workplace

### **Probable Case of COVID-19 (Symptomatic with COVID-19 Exposure and No COVID-19 result):**

- If HCW was not swabbed:
  - can RTW 14 days after symptom onset and 24 hours after symptoms resolving, whichever is longer,
  - **OR/** RTW 24 hours after symptoms resolving with use of appropriate PPE and \*work-self- isolation until 14 days from symptom onset
- If swabbed and **results negative**, guidance depends on exposure:
  - No known exposure - HCWs can RTW when symptom free for 24 hours
  - Medium risk exposure – continue to self monitor for change or worsening of symptoms for 14 days from exposure and RTW 24 hours after symptom resolution
  - High Risk exposure – remain self isolated for 14 days from exposure and 24 hours after symptom resolution, whichever is longer.
    - If HCW is deemed critical to operations by OH, staff person can RTW 24 hours after symptom resolution on “work-self-isolation” but must undergo regular screening, use appropriate PPE and undertake active self monitoring including twice daily temperature checks for the remainder of the 14 days following exposure.
    - HCW must immediately identify to OH if symptoms develop during the 14 day period and must continue work-self-isolation for full 14 days.

\*Definitions of exposure risk are available in [the Public Health Management of Cases and Contacts of COVID-19 in Ontario](#) guide available on our website.

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#### North Hastings

1P Manor Ln., L1-024, P.O. Box 99, Bancroft, ON K0L 1C0  
T: 613-966-5500 | F: 613-332-5418

#### Prince Edward County

Suite 1, 35 Bridge St., Picton, ON K0K 2T0  
T: 613-966-5500 | F: 613-476-2919

#### Quinte West

499 Dundas St. W., Trenton, ON K8V 6C4  
T: 613-966-5500 | F: 613-965-6535

### **Confirmed Case / Positive COVID-19 Lab Results:**

- HCW's should now follow isolation and clearance with a non-test based approach (as per criteria below), unless they have required hospitalization during the course of their illness
- Test-based approach to RTW - 2 consecutive negative COVID-19 specimens collected at least 24 hours apart

### **Symptomatic HCW with Lab Confirmed COVID-19**

- can RTW after minimum of 72 hours after symptoms resolving AND follow \*work-self-isolation for 14 days from symptom onset
- must adhere to universal masking, maintain physical distancing, meticulous hand hygiene and cohorted to provide care for COVID-19 cases as available

### **Asymptomatic HCW with Lab Confirmed COVID-19 and recent potential exposure** (e.g. workplace outbreak):

- can RTW after minimum of 72 hours from positive specimen collection date to ensure symptoms have not developed in that time (may be early identification of virus in pre-symptomatic period) AND follow \*work-self-isolation for 14 days from positive specimen collection date
- must adhere to universal masking, maintain physical distancing, meticulous hand hygiene and cohorted to provide care for COVID-19 cases as available

### **Asymptomatic HCW with Lab Confirmed COVID-19 & NO known recent potential exposure**, (e.g. no outbreak)

- no minimum time off from the positive specimen collection date
- consistently asymptomatic HCWs can continue working in work-self-isolation until 14 days from specimen collection date
- must adhere to universal masking, maintain physical distancing, meticulous hand hygiene and cohorted to provide care for COVID-19 cases as available

### **Non COVID-19 Related Illness (i.e. symptomatic but no exposure history)**

- HCWs exhibiting any common, other or atypical symptoms of COVID-19 as per the Ministry of Health's [COVID-19 Reference Document for Symptoms](#) should be tested
- HCWs can return to work when symptom free for 24 hours with non COVID-19 related illness
- If swabbed for COVID-19 must self isolate until results are received
  - Negative results – HCW can return to work when symptom free for 24 hours
  - Positive results – manage as confirmed case

### **Asymptomatic HCWs who have travelled outside of Canada**

- Self-isolate for 14 days from return to Canada and self-monitor for symptoms of COVID-19
- If HCW is deemed critical by OH, staff person can RTW on “work-self-isolation” during the 14 days but must undergo regular screening, use appropriate PPE and undertake active self monitoring including twice daily temperature checks for the remainder of the 14 days following exposure. HCW must immediately identify to OH if symptoms develop during the 14 day period and must continue work-self-isolation for full 14 days.

### **Asymptomatic HCWs with high risk exposure to Confirmed or Probable Case**

- Self isolate for 14 days from the last exposure
- If HCW is deemed critical by OH, staff person can RTW on “work-self-isolation” during the 14 days but must undergo regular screening, use appropriate PPE and undertake active self monitoring including twice daily temperature checks for the remainder of the 14 days following exposure. HCW must immediately identify to OH if symptoms develop during the 14 day period and must continue work-self-isolation for full 14 days.

### **Close contact definition according to Government of Canada:**

- Lived with or otherwise had close prolonged contact (within 2 meters) while the person was infectious (**prolonged = at least 15 min within 2 metres of ill person** (15 min is not cumulative) or **2 hrs same room**)
- Had direct contact with infectious bodily fluids of the person (i.e. was coughed or sneezed on) while not wearing personal protective equipment
- Provided care for the individual, including healthcare workers, family members or other caregivers, or who had similar close physical contact without consistent and appropriate use of personal protective equipment

Current information on COVID-19 specifically for health care providers can be found at [hpePublicHealth.ca](http://hpePublicHealth.ca), [Ontario Ministry of Health](http://OntarioMinistryofHealth) and at [publichealthontario.ca](http://publichealthontario.ca).

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