Health Care Worker Monitoring for COVID-19 High-Risk Exposure

4/22/2021

Why you are receiving this sheet

- You are a health care worker (HCW), and you came into contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19. This contact might have happened while caring for patients or residents at work, being with coworkers, or while spending time with people inside and outside your household.
- Your contact situation was a high-risk exposure, which means it put you at risk for getting COVID-19.
- The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) has the following information and recommendations for you.

Quarantine from work

**Fully vaccinated HCWs**

- HCWs who are fully vaccinated at the time of exposure do not need to quarantine from the community if they meet the following criteria:
  - The COVID-19 exposure was at least 14 days after their vaccination series was fully completed.
  - They do not currently have any symptoms of COVID-19.
  - They do not have an underlying immunocompromising condition that would impact the effectiveness of the COVID-19 vaccine.
- They should continue to wear recommended personal protective equipment (PPE) and follow COVID-19 testing requirements.

**Not vaccinated or not fully vaccinated HCWs**

- MDH recommends that you quarantine.
  - This quarantine would last for 14 days after your last exposure to someone with COVID-19.
  - Stay out of work for those 14 days, unless your employer requests you to return because there are not enough employees. See the “Return to Work” section below for more information.
  - On the phone, you were told the date your voluntary quarantine ends. The date will also be written in emails you get from MDH.
Exposed HCWs must continue to self-monitor for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 through day 14. If signs or symptoms develop at any time during the 14-day period, the HCW should seek testing and isolate at home.

If you get tested and are negative for COVID-19, you still must carry out all 14 days of quarantine.

If you are not yet fully vaccinated with COVID-19 vaccination (14 days or more days past your final dose), you are still required to follow the 14-day quarantine from work guidance following a high-risk exposure.

HCWs will continue to be prioritized for COVID-19 vaccination. If you decide that you’d like to be vaccinated in the future, ask your health care provider or employer how.

Because COVID-19 vaccination provides good protection against infection, if you were fully vaccinated and had another high-risk exposure, you would not need to quarantine from work or the community.

HCWs should not start the vaccine series if they are currently in a 14-day quarantine. If the series has been started, the second dose may be given, as long as providers and HCWs take precautions to reduce potential transmission.

## Quarantine from the community

### Fully vaccinated HCWs

- HCWs who are fully vaccinated at the time of exposure do not need to quarantine from the community if they meet the following criteria:
  - The COVID-19 exposure was at least 14 days after their vaccination series was fully completed.
  - They do not currently have any symptoms of COVID-19.
- They should continue to wear a mask, and socially distance when out in the community, but they can run errands, etc.

### Not vaccinated or not fully vaccinated HCWs

- HCWs who are not vaccinated at the time of exposure, or who are not yet 14 days past their final dose of vaccine, should quarantine from the community.
  - Stay home as much as possible. Ask someone else to go to the store for you and help you with other things that you need.
- More information about what activities are allowed during quarantine can be found in [Quarantine Guidance for COVID-19](www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/quarguide.pdf).
- Under certain conditions, some people, including some HCWs, may qualify for a shorter quarantine and return to community activities sooner than 14 days as outlined in the community quarantine guidance found at [Close Contacts and Tracing: COVID-19](www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/close.html#long). To qualify, you must not have any symptoms, have not tested positive, and had defined exposure with a start and end point. If those are true, you can return to community activities at either 10 days, or 7 days with a negative PCR test taken at least 5 days after exposure.
- If you have had a household exposure, you are not eligible for this shortened quarantine, and it may be longer, based on when the last positive person in the house ends their isolation period.
Returning to work

- If your employer does not have enough staff and you are not sick, they can ask you to work during the 14-day quarantine. It is your right to choose whether or not to work during that time.
- Minnesota state law has employment protections for a person who stays away from work because of a health department recommendation. We can provide a letter describing these protections, if you need to provide information to your workplace.
- If you return to work during the quarantine, you must wear a medical-grade facemask (not a cloth mask) at work. The facemask must be worn at all times when providing care and when within 6 feet of any other person.
- You should consider a mid-shift self-assessment for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 while working during quarantine.

Health monitoring

- During quarantine, you must be monitored by MDH for symptoms of COVID-19. We will ask you to check yourself for fever, cough, sore throat, difficulty breathing or other symptoms every day.
- MDH will send you an email every day with a link.
  - Click the link. You will see a survey to report your temperature and symptoms you might have.
  - If you do not fill out the survey by 4 p.m. each day, we will call to speak with you.
- Take your temperature each morning and evening at about the same time every day. Write down the exact temperature reading so you can put the highest one in the survey. If you don’t have a thermometer, monitor yourself for signs of feeling feverish, such as chills, hot flashes, or sweats.

What to do if you get sick

- Do not work while sick, even if you are only mildly ill.
  - If you are at home and become sick, do not go to work. Call your supervisor to report your symptoms and tell them you will not be at work.
  - If you become sick at work, tell your supervisor and go home.
- If you get a fever or respiratory symptoms, you must immediately separate yourself from others.
  - Stay home. Do not go to the store or socialize with others.
  - Stay away from other people in your home. As best you can, stay in a different room and use a different bathroom, if there is one.
  - Learn more about protecting those in your house at What To Do if You Have COVID-19 (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/case.pdf)
- Get tested. See more information below.
  - Learn more about what to do if you test positive or negative at COVID-19 Recommendations for Health Care Workers (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/hcwrecs.pdf).
How to protect yourself and others at work

- **The work you do to care for people is important.** MDH and your employer want to help you be safe when you return to work.
- Wear a medical-grade facemask and practice good hand hygiene. This will help keep patients, residents, and coworkers safe if you develop COVID-19 without feeling sick.
- To keep yourself safe, use all personal protective equipment (PPE) needed for your job duties.
  - When caring for a patient or resident with suspected or confirmed COVID-19, you must wear a medical-grade facemask and eye protection. Gown and gloves should also be used depending on specific duties or procedures.
  - These recommendations for PPE don’t change with your vaccination status. Even fully vaccinated HCWs should wear the appropriate PPE when at work.
- Find information and videos about putting on and removing PPE at [CDC: Using Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/using-ppe.html). We have also emailed a PPE fact sheet to you.

If you need testing

- If you get sick with fever or symptoms of COVID-19, you should get tested. MDH also recommends that you be tested 5-7 days after exposure, even if they are not ill. Every HCW is a priority for testing in Minnesota.
  - Call your regular health care provider to schedule an appointment for testing or look for testing locations at [State of Minnesota: Find Testing Locations](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/waiting.html).
- If your health care provider is unwilling to test you, we can email you a letter stating that staff at your facility should be tested.
- Please follow recommendations for [What to Do While You Wait for a COVID-19 Test Result](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/waiting.html).

Travel recommendations for HCW

Travel increases your chances of getting and spreading COVID-19. CDC and MDH recommend that unvaccinated people do not travel at this time. Delay travel and stay home to protect yourself and others from COVID-19.

MDH recommends that **unvaccinated** people in Minnesota participating in domestic and international travel:

- Enter self-quarantine for 14 days after arrival in Minnesota by limiting their interactions to their immediate household.
- Get tested for COVID-19 1-3 days prior to travel and 3-5 days post-travel and practice careful preventive measures during travel.
- These recommendations apply to unvaccinated HCWs.
These recommendations do not apply to people who must cross state or country borders for work, study, medical care, or personal safety and security.

MDH recommends that **fully vaccinated** people who participate in non-essential travel do the following:

- Practice careful preventive measures during travel.
- Get tested for COVID-19 3-5 days post-travel.

Fully vaccinated HCWs who remain asymptomatic do not need to quarantine from work or the community following international or domestic travel. Further guidance for pre- and post-travel testing and quarantine recommendations following travel can be found here:

- [Protect Yourself & Others: Traveling](www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/prevention.html#travel)

**More Resources**

More resources for coping with the COVID-19 pandemic can be found at the [Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)](www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/index.html).

Questions? Call MDH at 651-201-5935 (Monday, Thursday and Friday 8 a.m.—4:30 p.m., Tuesday and Wednesday 8 a.m.—7 p.m., and Sundays, 10 a.m.—4 p.m.) or 651-334-8102 at other times. When you call, say you are a health care worker being monitored.

🎉 Wear a mask. 🧼 Wash your hands. 🎈 Stay 6 feet from others. 🏡 Stay home if you feel sick.