

March 27, 2020

FAQ for Staff at Higher Risk for COVID-19

We understand that some staff are concerned that their age, status, or health condition may put them at higher risk with COVID-19. Here are some suggestions and FAQs for addressing questions and concerns.

I have an underlying health condition and I am worried that in my job I may come into contact with patients with COVID-19. What should I do to protect myself?

First, make sure that you are using all of the recommended PPE for the type of work you are doing in your unit. PPE is critical to protecting you. If you are concerned about your role even with the use of proper PPE, you can reach out to your supervisor or department leader to discuss your concern and see if there is a different assignment for you.

Do I have to tell my supervisor what my condition is?

No, you can just tell your supervisor that you have a condition that you think puts you at higher risk. Your supervisor will tell you to bring documentation of that condition to OHS, or if OHS has it already, to get confirmation from OHS that the condition is one that could make you at higher risk for COVID-19 infection.

Will my supervisor change my assignment?

If OHS confirms that your condition puts you at higher risk, your supervisor will consider whether they can change your assignment to reduce your risk and still complete the work of the unit. If they can't change your assignment, they will escalate your request to the leadership of your department for another look to see if you could be assigned elsewhere temporarily.

What if the department leadership doesn't reassign me or I don't like the reassignment? Do I have a choice?

You always have the right to seek a formal accommodation for your condition through the Office of Equal Employment – every facility has an assigned EEO Officer. If you go that route, the EEO officer will consider your request, seek documentation of your condition, and work with your supervisor to see if there is a reasonable accommodation for your unique employment circumstances to address the risk related to your condition.



Sometimes, a reasonable accommodation can include taking leave using your leave balances or an unpaid leave of absence. There is no guarantee that you will receive leave as an accommodation or have a choice of assignments.

If I am reassigned, how long will the reassignment last?

Since the reassignments are based on very specific circumstances related to COVID-19 and to operational need, those assignments could change as circumstances related to the pandemic change.

What are conditions that might put me at higher risk?

The medical literature is still evolving, but the following conditions are believed to put a person at higher risk of COVID-19:

- Pregnancy
- Current Immunocompromised state
- Hematopoietic stem cell transplant
- Current systemic chemotherapy
- Solid organ transplant
- Chronic and ongoing use of immunosuppressive agents including biologics or prednisone 20mg daily for > 2 weeks
- HIV infection with CD4 < 200

Age:

- Adults > 70 years old

Serious underlying medical conditions

- Significant cardiovascular disease (ASCVD risk > 10% or class III or IV CHF)
- Diabetes with A1c > 10
- Lung disease (requiring home oxygen, cystic fibrosis, COPD stage 3-4, asthma requiring daily high dose inhaled steroids)
- Kidney disease (stage 4-5 or on dialysis)
- Severe liver disease (Child-Pugh score > 10)

