

Frequently Asked Questions on COVID-19 For Health Care Staff

Return to Work Guidance

What should I do if I test positive?

If your COVID-19 test result is positive, you are not to go into your office/work site and must immediately [contact OHS](#) for isolation instructions.

What does exposure mean?

Generally, exposure means that you were in close contact (within six feet) with a person who is known to be COVID-19 positive—and you were not wearing an appropriate face mask or not wearing it properly and/or not wearing eye protection—for a total of 10 minutes or more in a 24-hour period.

An exposure can also occur where you are not wearing all appropriate PPE during an aerosol-generating procedure on a COVID-positive patient.

High risk exposures, are those where material containing COVID-19 is in direct contact with the healthcare provider's eyes, nose and/or mouth.

Low risk exposures, are where there is ungowned/ungloved contact with a COVID-19 infected patient and then touching one's eyes, nose and/or mouth.

What should I do if I'm exposed at work or in the community?

Any staff member who was exposed and either has symptoms or is not yet fully vaccinated (including those who have received only one dose of an mRNA- Pfizer or Moderna- COVID-19 vaccine) must [reach out to OHS](#) immediately for further guidance.

Fully vaccinated (two weeks or more since your last COVID-19 primary series vaccine dose) asymptomatic employees or those who are recovered from COVID-19 infection in the prior 90 days and are asymptomatic will not generally be required to quarantine and can continue working.

If they have a high-risk exposure, they should report this to OHS, continue to work and have a series of two viral tests for COVID-19 infection (the first test two days after exposure and, if negative, the second test five to seven days after exposure).

If they have a low risk exposure and remain asymptomatic, there are no work restrictions. If an exposed (high or low risk) staff member develops symptoms or test positive for COVID-19, they should notify OHS and not return to work until advised to by OHS.

Fully vaccinated asymptomatic employees working in a Nursing Home who are exposed are still required to get COVID-19 testing twice per week and comply with symptom monitoring through day 14.

If an employee is unsure of what to do regarding an exposure, they should [contact OHS](#).

How long will I need to isolate and stay out of work if I test positive?

Always call OHS and OHS will guide you. Isolation guidance is based on your vaccine status.

Fully vaccinated employees (two weeks or more since your last COVID-19 primary series vaccine dose) who are COVID-19 positive but asymptomatic and are not moderately to severely immunocompromised can return to work 5 days after a positive test result without testing and must consistently and correctly wear a facemask in addition to taking other safety precautions.

Partially vaccinated employees (those who have received only one dose of an mRNA- Pfizer or Moderna- COVID-19 vaccine) who are COVID-19 positive and are not moderately to severely immunocompromised can return to work after 10 days from either date of symptom onset (if symptomatic) or date of first viral diagnostic test (if asymptomatic).

Will I have to take my own sick leave or is there a special COVID-19 leave available?

Employees who are COVID-19 positive and were exposed while at work may be eligible for special COVID-19 leave if placed on isolation by OHS. Employees exposed outside of work, working remotely, performing child care or family care who have to isolate or quarantine due to COVID-19 are required to use their personal leave.

Read the full policy in our Return to Work policy document [here](#).

If an employee has additional questions about special COVID-19 leave, they should [contact OHS](#).

Booster Shots

How can I schedule my booster shot?

Booster shots are free, safe and available to all staff. Our hospitals and Gotham Health centers offer dedicated, expedited lines for our employees. [Schedule your booster shot today!](#)

I got my booster shot outside of the health system. How do I report my updated vaccination status?

All staff who received booster shots outside of NYC Health + Hospitals are urged to submit proof for their COVID-19 Vaccination Record [here](#).

I still have questions about booster shots.

Where can I find more information?

You can learn more about booster shots in our FAQ document [here](#).

Updated Visitation Policy

What is the updated visitation policy?

To protect our patients, visitors, and staff, visits to hospitalized patients are temporarily suspended.

Exceptions to this policy may apply when:

- + visit is medically-necessary and essential to the patient's care
- + patient is in an end-of-life situation
- + patient is receiving Labor & Delivery services
- + patient is an infant in the neonatal ICU, or a minor
- + patient has a developmental or cognitive disability
- + patient needs other support

For outpatient appointments, one person is allowed to accompany each patient

- + Special aides or assistants will also be allowed at the same time, if required

Visitors who show COVID-19 symptoms, or who may have been exposed to someone with COVID-19, will not be permitted.

Where can I read the full updated visitation policy?

Please find the full policy document [here](#).

Are there flyers about the updated visitation policy I can share with my team?

Yes. The Ambulatory Care flyer can be downloaded [here](#) and the Hospital flyer can be downloaded [here](#).

Monoclonal Antibodies

Is our health system still offering monoclonal antibody treatment?

Most monoclonal antibodies are not effective against the Omicron variant which is the predominant form of COVID-19 currently circulating. Only Sotrovimab has been found to be effective against Omicron and it is in very limited supply throughout the US. Thus, [eligibility has been tightened](#). To see if patients or staff are eligible, please contact virtual ExpressCare by calling 212-COVID19 (212-268-4319) and pressing 9. Or go to: [expresscare.nyc](https://www.expresscare.nyc)

Read the latest message from our Chief Pharmacy Officer and Chief Medical Officer on the status of monoclonal antibody treatments for COVID-19 [here](#).

You can learn more about the monoclonal antibody treatment by [clicking here](#).

Antiviral Pill

What is the latest update on an antiviral pill treatment for COVID-19 positive patients?

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued an [emergency use authorization \(EUA\)](#) for Pfizer's Paxlovid (nirmatrelvir tablets and ritonavir tablets, co-packaged for oral use) for the treatment of mild-to-moderate COVID-19 in adults and pediatric patients (12 years of age and older weighing at least 40 kilograms or about 88 pounds), and who are at high risk for progression to severe COVID-19, including hospitalization or death. Merck's Molnupiravir also received approval as an alternative to Paxlovid. Both oral pills are available only by prescription and are in very limited supplies across the US. They are intended for persons at high-risk for severe disease or complications from COVID-19 and should be started as soon as possible after diagnosis. To see if patients or staff are eligible, please contact virtual

ExpressCare by calling 212-COVID19 (212-268-4319) and pressing 9. Or go to: expresscare.nyc

Personal Protective Equipment

Is there updated guidance on PPE?

To keep our workforce safe, we remind all staff about [the latest Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\) Guidance](#). These requirements apply regardless of your vaccination status or history of recovery from previous COVID-19 infection:

- + All staff must wear a well-fitting facemask at all times, except when eating or drinking, but in that situation all staff should be maintaining physical distancing of six feet.
- + Cloth masks, scarves, bandanas, and any masks with exhalation valves are prohibited.
- + Eye protection must be worn for all clinical care encounters.
- + N95 respirators plus eye protection must be worn in all high-volume clinical care areas regardless of the patient's COVID-19 status
- + Extended use of facemask such as an N95 respirator and eye protection is permitted in certain settings, and must be done with caution.
- + Staff can obtain a new PPE item at any time.

What is the proper type of PPE that should be worn in various settings in our health system?

[Click here](#) to learn more about the proper type of PPE that should be worn in different settings.

What is the proper behavior to keep my colleagues safe in the break room?

[Click here](#) to review Breakroom etiquette.