



Arkansas Department of Health

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Updated 4/13/20, 6/18/20, 8/6/20

Return to Work Guidance for COVID-19 Infected/Exposed Healthcare Personnel

Purpose:

To provide interim guidance on the decisions regarding when healthcare personnel (HCP), who have potential exposure to patients with COVID-19 in the healthcare setting, may return to work. This guidance is based on the current recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) based on the known information about COVID-19. ADH recommends a symptom-based strategy to determine when to HCP to return to work.

Healthcare Personnel with Confirmed/Suspected COVID-19:

HCP with mild to moderate illness who are not severely immunocompromised:

- At least 10 days have passed *since symptoms first appeared* **and**
- At least 24 hours have passed *since last fever* without the use of fever-reducing medications **and**
- Symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath) have improved

Note: HCP who are **not severely immunocompromised** and were **asymptomatic** throughout their infection may return to work when at least 10 days have passed since the date of their first positive viral diagnostic test.

HCP with severe to critical illness or who are severely immunocompromised:

- At least 20 days have passed *since symptoms first appeared*
- At least 24 hours have passed *since last fever* without the use of fever-reducing medications **and**
- Symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath) have improved

Note: HCP who are **severely immunocompromised** but who were **asymptomatic** throughout their infection may return to work when at least 20 days have passed since the date of their first positive viral diagnostic test.

After returning to work, HCP should:

- Wear a facemask (surgical or procedure masks) for source control at all times while in the healthcare facility. A facemask (surgical or procedure mask) instead of a cloth face covering should be used by these HCP for source control during this time period while in the facility. After

this time period, these HCP should revert to their facility policy regarding universal source control during the pandemic.

- A facemask for source control does not replace the need to wear an N95 or equivalent or higher-level respirator (or other recommended PPE) when indicated, including when caring for patients with suspected or confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infection.
- Self-monitor for symptoms, and seek re-evaluation from occupational health if symptoms recur or worsen
- Considerations:
 - Reassign HCP who work with immunocompromised patients (transplant patients, malignancy) to work in different areas.

Guidance for Asymptomatic HCP Who Were Exposed to Individuals with Confirmed COVID-19

Exposure	Personal Protective Equipment Used	Work Restrictions
HCP who had prolonged close contact with a patient, visitor, or HCP with confirmed COVID-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● HCP not wearing a respirator or facemask ● HCP not wearing eye protection if the person with COVID-19 was not wearing a cloth face covering or facemask ● HCP not wearing all recommended PPE (i.e., gown, gloves, eye protection, respirator) while performing an aerosol-generating procedure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Exclude from work for 14 days after last exposure⁵ ● Advise HCP to monitor themselves for fever or <u>symptoms consistent with COVID-19</u> ● Any HCP who develop fever or <u>symptoms consistent with COVID-19</u> should immediately contact their established point of contact (e.g., occupational health program) to arrange for medical evaluation and testing.
HCP other than those with exposure risk described above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No work restrictions

Maintaining appropriate staffing in healthcare facilities is essential to providing a safe work environment for HCP and safe patient care. Healthcare facilities must be prepared for potential staffing shortages and have plans and processes in place to mitigate them, including considerations for permitting HCP to return to work without meeting all return to work criteria above

References:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/healthcare-facilities/hcp-return-work.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-risk-assesment-hcp.html>