

Ministry Updates COVID-19 Return to Work Guidance for Health Care Workers

Update to York Region health care providers as of April 17, 2020

In addition to the guidance on COVID-19 testing, [covered in our message of April 15, 2020](#), Ontario's Ministry of Health has also updated its recommendations for health care workers returning to work.

Recommendations for Health Care Workers Return to Work

Health care workers (HCW) showing any symptoms should be tested for COVID-19.

Symptoms	Test Result	Recommendations
Yes	Positive	Test-based approach: HCWs who have tested positive for COVID-19 should remain off work until they receive 2 consecutive negative specimens (single NP swab) at least 24 hours apart Non test-based approach: HCWs may return to work 14 days after symptom onset (or as directed by their employer/Occupational Health and Safety)
Yes	Negative	May return to work 24 hours after symptom resolution. If the HCW was self-isolating due to an exposure at the time of testing, return to work should be under work self-isolation* until 14 days from last exposure.
Never symptomatic at time of test	Positive	Test-based approach: HCWs who have tested positive for COVID-19 should remain off work until they receive 2 consecutive negative specimens (single NP swab) at least 24 hours apart Non test-based approach: HCWs may return to work 14 days after positive specimen collection date (or as directed by their employer /Occupational Health and Safety)

*"Work self-isolation" means maintaining self-isolation measures outside of work for 14 days from symptom onset (or 14 days from positive specimen collection date if asymptomatic) to avoid transmitting to household members or other community contacts. While at work, the HCW should use appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), maintain physical distancing (>2m) except for providing direct care, and perform meticulous hand hygiene. At a minimum, a mask should be worn in common areas and particularly when 2 metres distance cannot be maintained. Appropriate PPE should be worn when providing patient/resident care. These measures at work are required to continue until test-based or non-test based clearance.

In exceptional circumstances where additional staff are critically required, an earlier return to work of a COVID-19 positive HCW may be considered under work self-isolation recognizing the staff may still be infectious.

- In the case of a positive symptomatic HCW, there should be a minimum of 72 hours after illness resolving, defined as resolution of fever and improvement in respiratory/other symptoms.

- In the case of a positive asymptomatic HCW, there should be a minimum of 72 hours from positive specimen collection date to ensure symptoms have not developed in that time.

Reminder: Diagnosing COVID-19 in your patients

In a symptomatic patient:

- A single positive result is sufficient to confirm the presence of COVID-19
- In a case with no known exposures, a single negative result is sufficient to exclude COVID-19 at that time. Depending on the clinical scenario (i.e., persistent, new or worsening symptoms,) repeat testing can be considered.
- In a case currently within their 14-day self-isolation as a result of known exposure, a single negative result is sufficient to exclude COVID-19 at that time. The individual should remain in self-isolation for the rest of their 14-day period. If symptoms change or worsen, consider the need for repeat testing.

Testing of asymptomatic patients (i.e., have not had symptoms) is not generally recommended at this time. Prioritization should be given to symptomatic over asymptomatic individuals. If an individual has not had symptoms and is tested:

- If the test is negative, this is sufficient to exclude COVID-19 at that time. If symptoms develop in the future, additional testing should be considered.
- If the test is positive, this should be managed as a confirmed case of COVID-19, even without symptoms.

For more information

Call our dedicated health professional COVID-19 line at **1-877-464-9675 ext. 77280** (8:30 a.m. to 8 p.m., seven days a week, after hours call 905-953-6478). Continue to visit york.ca/healthprofessionals, york.ca/covid19 and Ontario.ca/covid19 for up to date information on COVID-19.