COVID-19 Labor/HR
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

These guidelines are as of April 24, 2020 and subject to modification. Please be sure to check these periodically.

Feeling Sick

I feel sick, should I report to work?
If you are not feeling well, and have any of the 5 symptoms below, do not report to work and contact Employee Health Services (EHS) via the online EHS REDCap tool to be screened COVID-19 like illness. Signs and symptoms of COVID -19 include:

- Fever (temperature greater than 100° Fahrenheit)
- Shortness of breath
- New onset persistent cough
- Nasal congestion & runny nose not associated with seasonal allergies
- Sore throat

If you are already at work and develop any of the above signs and symptoms, you MUST immediately mask and leave the patient care area and inform your supervisor.

To access the tool click **EHS REDCap** or scan this QR code.

Upon your registration, a member of the EHS team will call you within 24 hours.

If an employee does not have internet access, they can call 212-844-1100, and a member of the EHS will assist you to register in the REDCap tool.

Symptomatic employees should NOT walk into their local EHS sites, but follow the protocol outlined above.

I feel fine but want to be safe, are there any recommendations?

With the COVID-19 pandemic in the NY metropolitan area, most healthcare workers have had some exposure to COVID-19. Everyone should be practicing social distancing, good hand-hygiene and self-monitoring for Covid-19 illness. To self-monitor for COVID-19 illness, you should take your temperature twice daily and assess for COVID-19 like illness. Signs and symptoms of COVID -19 include:
• Fever (temperature greater than 100° Fahrenheit)
• Shortness of breath
• New onset persistent cough
• Nasal congestion & runny nose not associated with seasonal allergies
• Sore throat

Please also review the Guidelines to Protect Family Members information for additional safety tips:


I think I was exposed to COVID-19. What happens now?
With the COVID-19 pandemic in the NY metropolitan area, most healthcare workers have had some exposure to COVID-19. Everyone should be practicing social distancing, good hand-hygiene and self-monitoring for Covid-19 illness. To self-monitor for COVID-19 illness, you should take your temperature twice daily and assess for COVID-19 like illness

However, if an employee has had an high-risk exposure, defined as unprotected contact (> 10 minutes) with a confirmed COVID-19 patient or unprotected contact during an aerosolizing procedure performed on a COVID-19 patient, you are required to report it immediately to both your supervisor and EHS. Healthcare workers may still report to work as long as they are asymptomatic and will be actively monitored by EHS.

To report a high-risk exposure MUST notify EHS via the EHS online EHS tool. To access the tool click EHS REDCap (https://is.gd/employee_covid_registry) or scan this QR code.

Is MSHS testing all of their employees for COVID-19?
As of April 7, 2020, MSHS has officially begun offering COVID-19 testing for employees. Testing eligibility falls into 2 testing categories:

1. Employees that have active COVID-19 symptoms are eligible for the Nasopharyngeal swab (PCR test)
   • PCR testing is indicated when someone has developed acute COVID-19 symptoms (e.g. fever (>100° F), shortness of breath, new onset persistent cough, nasal congestion and runny nose not associated with seasonal allergies, sore throat)
   • Current recommendation is for PCR testing to occur 2 to 4 days after symptom onset

   If you meet the criteria outlined above, are interested in PCR COVID testing, and have NOT yet registered in the EHS COVID REDcap survey, click EHS REDCap or scan this QR to register.

2. Employees that were previously symptomatic and meet the criteria below are eligible for Serum-Antibody testing (IgG):
• For testing, you **MUST** be 21 days or more from your date of symptom onset and it is at least 14 days or more since resolution of any symptoms. This is because IgG takes approximately 21 days or more to form and accurately determine immunity.

• Current clinical criteria for antibody testing is as follows:
  a. You tested **positive** for Covid-19 by a nasal swab more than 21 days ago and your symptoms have completely resolved more than 14 days ago, OR
  b. You had symptoms which were **diagnosed** by a healthcare provider to be consistent with Covid-19 more than 21 days ago and your symptoms have completely resolved more than 14 days ago, OR
  c. You had a **high-risk exposure to a patient with laboratory-confirmed** COVID-19 in the healthcare setting, that was more than 21 days ago and have been asymptomatic since the exposure.

If you meet the criteria outlined above, are interested in COVID testing, and have **NOT** yet registered in the EHS COVID REDcap survey, click [EHS REDcap](#) or scan this QR to register.

**Can I be tested if I am asymptomatic?**

At this time, we are unable to test asymptomatic employees for COVID-19.

**I have COVID-like symptoms and am on self-isolation, when can I return to work?**

Employees are able to return to work 7 days after symptom onset and being consistently afebrile (temperature < 100°F Fahrenheit) for at least 72 hours without taking fever reducing medications (e.g. aspirin, acetaminophen), along with resolving respiratory symptoms.

**I have symptoms and my Nasopharyngeal Swab (PCR) test was positive, when do I return to work?**

Employees are able to return to work 7 days after symptom onset and being consistently afebrile (temperature < 100°F Fahrenheit) for at least 72 hours without taking fever reducing medications (e.g. aspirin, acetaminophen), along with resolving respiratory symptoms.

**My Nasopharyngeal Swab (PCR) test was negative, when do I return to work?**

Employees can either:

- Return to work 7 days after symptom onset and being consistently afebrile (temperature < 100°F Fahrenheit) for at least 72 hours without taking fever reducing medications (e.g. aspirin, acetaminophen), along with resolving respiratory symptoms.
- Volunteer to return to work before the 7 days post symptom onset, as long as you are afebrile for 72 hrs without fever reducing medications

**I have COVID-19 symptoms and had a Nasopharyngeal Swab (PCR) test, what should I do?**
Symptomatic healthcare workers who are awaiting test results are required to self-isolate pending those results. If positive, the employee or healthcare workers cannot work for at least 7 days from the onset of symptoms. A person is able to return to work after 7 days of symptom onset, regardless of date of testing, if they have been consistently afebrile (temperature < 100°F Fahrenheit) for at least 72 hours without taking fever reducing medications (e.g. aspirin, acetaminophen), along with resolving respiratory symptoms.

Employees that test negative can volunteer to return to work before the 7 days post symptom onset, as long as they have been afebrile for 72 hours without fever reducing medications.

No repeat testing is required to return to work per NYC DOHMH.

**I am ready to return to work, what do I have to do?**

EHS must clear all employees before returning to work, and is calling employees when they become eligible. Alternatively, employees can call 212-844-1100 on the 7th day of symptom onset. EHS clears employees over the phone, and onsite appointment is not required.

Employees that have a negative Nasopharyngeal Swab (PCR) test can volunteer to return to work before the 7 days post symptom onset, as long as they have been afebrile for 72 hours without fever reducing medications. Please call 212 844-1100 for EHS clearance.

**A colleague at work is exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms. What should I do?** Bring the matter to your supervisor’s/manager’s attention so that they may arrange for the employee to go home.

**Are there restrictions on facial hair and the N95 respirators?** Yes. Close fitting respirators need to seal tightly to the face. Gaps in this face-seal let the dirty air leak inside the N95 respirator. Even a day or two’s growth of stubble for some individuals can be enough to give significant leak paths for contaminants. Face seal leakage reduces the wearer’s protection. Effective immediately facial hair must be trimmed consistent with the chart below so that masks and respirators can tightly seal to the face. Please consult the chart. Staff with religious or other concerns should discuss with their manager, who may consult with Labor Relations.
Are there other tips on hand hygiene?

Be sure to wash your hands thoroughly and often as hand hygiene is one of the most important ways to prevent the spread of COVID-19. You can wash your hands with either soap and water or sanitizer. If you use soap and water, be sure to wash for at least 20 seconds and scrub every surface of both hands before rinsing with water. For sanitizer, rub it all over your hands until it is dry. Don’t forget to wash under fingernails.

Wearing gloves often gives individuals a false sense of security and may actually put individuals at risk. If you need to wear gloves be sure to wash your hands before you put them on and again after they are removed. Staff will not get sick from handling papers and short encounters with masked patients, and again, washing your hands not gloves is the best way to protect yourself.
What daily items should I keep clean?

Be sure to clean high touch surfaces (keyboards and screens and phones) frequently. Any household cleaner with activity against the flu is fine. If you wear gloves while cleaning, be sure to wash your hands after they are removed.

Paid Time Off (PTO) and Travel

PTO:

Paid Time Off (“PTO”), including vacation time, is a different issue than whether or not travel is permitted.

1. As always, all PTO requires pre-approval by the manager/supervisor.

2. Scheduled PTO that was approved before March 11, 2020 must be reviewed with the manager/supervisor again to confirm that the planned PTO is still acceptable given the COVID 19 emergency circumstances.

3. Even if approval is given for PTO, and because we anticipate that circumstances may change rapidly, all PTO must be re-reviewed and approved again with the manager/supervisor 48 hours in advance of the commencement of the PTO.

TRAVEL:

The travel policy, which also may change as circumstances change, can be accessed on the Mount Sinai COVID-19 web page.

NOTE: Staff who are required by Mount Sinai to cancel personal trips booked prior to March 11 should consult the policy for how to be considered for reimbursement for lost expenses and what documentation must be submitted.

I have recently returned from international travel, what do I need to do?

Staff who return from travel abroad and are asymptomatic may return to work. If staff develop symptoms of COVID-19 such as fever >100F, shortness of breath, persistent cough, nasal congestion or sore throat, they must inform EHS and their supervisor and stay home.
I have a conference coming up, should I cancel?

Please consult the Travel Policy on the MSHS Intranet.

All WORK-RELATED international and domestic travel is prohibited. In limited and specific circumstances, managers/supervisors may allow exceptions to this policy.

Commuting to Work

I use mass transit to commute. Are there tips on how I can ride safely?

For those who use mass transit, masks are now required for travel based on executive order from the Governor. We will be providing surgical masks to all staff for this purpose. For staff at clinical sites, please speak with your supervisor about obtaining a mask. Supervisors should communicate with Materials Management if they need additional masks for their team. For all administrative sites, the Real Estate Division will contact each site lead and deliver masks for individual distribution. If you are not contacted or need more masks, please contact the real estate property manager assigned to your office location.

Additionally practicing good hand hygiene is the best thing you can do to limit the spread of infection. Washing hands with soap and water for 20 seconds is the preferred method to clean hands, but that can be impracticable when on the go. If you are unable to wash your hands, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer before entering and after exiting subways, buses and trains. While riding, try not to touch your face. If you must use a phone or tablet, clean them frequently. If a bus or train is crowded, wait for the next one. When possible, avoid peak travel times. Discuss temporary work schedule modifications with your manager.
Are there any options for staff to work remotely?

Remote Work arrangements may be made available to employees working in positions that Mount Sinai first designates as appropriate for Remote Work. The designation that determines appropriateness for or Remote Work shall be based on considerations such as the following: the individual employee is in good standing, the nature of the position, the specific functions it involves, the ability to measure the work, and operational need.

Mount Sinai does not guarantee that Remote Work will be available for any job or category of jobs, or for any specific employee. Remote work is subject to departmental approval and periodic review for the duration of the COVID-19 crisis.

Employees should discuss remote work arrangements with their manager, who may consult with Labor Relations/HR.

Staff not involved in direct patient care who are subject to quarantine and are well, and work in a position for which a remote work arrangement is an appropriate alternative, may be required to do so.


**Impacted Family Member**

*My child’s school was closed. What should I do?*

All staff members are considered essential and should make best efforts to report to their regular assignment. If alternative arrangements for a staff member’s child(ren) cannot be made, staff should promptly reach out to their manager to discuss the following:

a. A temporary schedule modification (e.g. change of daily work hours, change of shift).

b. Working at home. This option will not be available to all staff members.

c. Using available PTO or vacation leave balances. New York City Earned Safe and Sick Time leave may apply.

   I. If you wish to take absences unpaid without deduction to available leave balances, then you must discuss this immediately with your manager (i.e. within twenty-four hours of your first call out).