Asymptomatic Healthcare Workers and Employees

On March 15, 2020, at 3:00PM, NYC Department of Health & Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) issued directions on how to manage and monitor all ASYMPTOMATIC healthcare workers for COVID-19, regardless of exposure in the community or healthcare setting. DOHMH has asked that ALL healthcare workers and employees self-monitor by taking their temperature twice daily and assessing for COVID-19 like illness.

Signs and symptoms of COVID-19 include:

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

Healthcare workers / employees who do not have any of the above symptoms should report to work, regardless of known COVID-19 exposure, unless they have been instructed by their supervisor/manager to work from home.

As defined by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC):

- Staff who have traveled to China within the last 14 days may require self-quarantine up to 14 days
- Travel to other 3 countries may require self-quarantine for 14 days

NOTE: The above guidance is subject to change based on Local, State and Federal health authority guidelines.

For healthcare workers and staff that have tested positive for COVID-19 refer to guidance below.

Symptomatic Healthcare Workers and Employees

If healthcare workers or other employees develop any of the above signs and symptoms they should not report to work. If any signs and symptoms occur while working, the healthcare worker/employee should immediately mask and leave the patient care area and inform their supervisor. Employee Health Service (EHS) does not need to be notified.

Individuals with mild illness who can safely be managed at home, may not require testing, and should self-isolate at home. You may be just as likely to have a different viral infection such as the common cold. If your symptoms worsen and/or have questions about COVID-19 testing criteria contact your primary care provider or EHS.

Healthcare Workers and other 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, ibuprofen, acetaminophen), along with resolving other respiratory symptoms.
WHAT (you should do)

• Rest, staying hydrated, and sleep are typically helpful in your recovery.
• Manage and treat your symptoms with fluids and medicines for fevers, cough, and other cold symptoms.
• Call your doctor if you start to feel worse (increased congestion, coughing or fevers).
• Seek emergency medical treatment if you have difficulty breathing

HOW (guidelines for hand washing and germ management)

• Clean your hands often. Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol, covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry. Soap and water should be used preferentially if hands are visibly dirty.
• Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
• Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw used tissues into a lined trash can. Immediately wash your hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer

Employees and Healthcare Workers Returning to Work after Home Isolation

Healthcare Workers and other 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, ibuprofen, acetaminophen), along with resolving other respiratory symptoms. Personnel must be cleared by EHS before returning to duty. EHS is available to answer employee questions or screen staff during EHS hours and on weekends. To make an appointment for clearance, email the appropriate EHS office using the addresses below:

• 42ndMSH Providers: EHS42ndMSHProviders@mountsinai.org
• MSB & MSBI Providers: EHSBIProviders@mountsinai.org
• MSH Providers: MSHEHSProviders@mountsinai.org
• MSM Providers: EHSSTLPromoters@mountsinai.org
• MSQ Providers: EHSMSQPromoters@mountsinai.org
• MSW Providers: EHSMSWPromoters@mountsinai.org
• NYEE Providers: EHSNYEEDPromoters@mountsinai.org
• For MSSN, call EHS at 516-255-8445

Staff who have recovered from COVID-19 or COVID-19 like illness should wear a facemask for 14 days after onset of illness, if mild symptoms persist but are improving.
Healthcare workers and other staff employed by a facility regulated by the New York State Health Department (e.g., an Article 28 Facility) or a jurisdiction outside of NYC should check with their employer before returning to work as the employer may have a different policy regarding COVID-19.

*NOTE: The above guidance is subject to change based on Local, State and Federal health authority guidelines.

**Employees and Healthcare Workers Awaiting Results or Confirmed COVID-19**

Employees and healthcare workers who have been tested for COVID-19 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°Fahrenheit) for at least 72 hours without taking fever reducing medications (e.g. aspirin, ibuprofen, acetaminophen), along with resolving other respiratory symptoms. No repeat testing is required to return to work per NYC DOHMH.

The employee must be cleared by EHS before returning to duty. EHS is available to answer employee questions or screen staff during EHS hours and on weekends. To make an appointment for clearance, email the appropriate EHS office using the addresses below:

- 42ndMSH Providers: EHS42ndMSHProviders@mountsinai.org
- MSB & MSBI Providers: EHSBIIProviders@mountsinai.org
- MSH Providers: MSHEHSPHelpers@mountsinai.org
- MSM Providers: EHSSTLProviders@mountsinai.org
- MSQ Providers: EHSMSQProviders@mountsinai.org
- MSW Providers: EHSMSWProviders@mountsinai.org
- NYEE Providers: EHSNYEEProviders@mountsinai.org
- For MSSN, call EHS at 516-255-8445

Healthcare workers and other staff employed by a facility regulated by the New York State Health Department (e.g., an Article 28 Facility) or a jurisdiction outside of NYC should check with their employer before returning to work as the employer may have a different policy regarding COVID-19.

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**Employees and Healthcare Workers with Exposures in the Healthcare Setting**

With community-spread of COVID-19, extensive contact investigations in the hospital setting will be limited. In the setting of a reported high-risk exposure (i.e. unprotected contact (> 10 minutes) with a confirmed COVID-19 patient or unprotected contact during an aerosolizing procedure performed on a COVID-19 patient), healthcare workers may report to work as long as they are asymptomatic and will be
actively monitored by EHS. Healthcare workers who have experienced a high-risk exposure, should report it immediately to their supervisor and EHS.

These personnel will be required to wear a surgical mask throughout their shift and self-monitor by taking their temperature twice daily and assessing for COVID-19 like illness. Temperatures and symptom log must be submitted to EHS electronically or by fax daily. (EHS will provide guidance on this process when incident is first reported).

Signs and symptoms of COVID-19 include:

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

As per the directions issued by the NYC DOHMH on March 15, 2020 at 3:00PM:

- COVID-19 testing is not indicated for any individual who does not have symptoms, regardless of exposure to a known case of COVID-19 or recent travel to an affected area
- COVID-19 testing is not indicated for any individual with mild symptoms who do not require hospitalization

*NOTE: The above guidance is subject to change based on Local, State and Federal health authority guidelines.

References:

- New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene Health Alert # 6 COVID-19 Updates for New York City March 15, 2020


- Centers for Disease Control (CDC)

- New York State Department of Health: Health Advisory – Protocols for Personnel to Return to Work Following COVID-19 Exposure. March 16, 2020

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1 Self-Isolations at home: Separation and restriction of activities of a symptomatic individual, limiting interaction with other individuals in the home