TRANSYLVANIA PUBLIC HEALTH

CORONAVIRUS GUIDANCE
Returning to Work   12/4/20

People with COVID-19 have had a wide range of symptoms reported – ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness. Most people who get COVID-19 will recover without needing medical care. Below you will find guidance on returning to work and other regular activities after you have been sick.

GUIDANCE FOR EMPLOYEES

If you are sick with COVID-19 *or if you think you might have it*, you should stay home except to get medical care and call your healthcare provider. Symptoms of COVID-19 include fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, and diarrhea.

Testing for COVID-19 is available in Transylvania County. Call your healthcare provider to determine if you need to be tested for COVID-19. Call the TPH nurse line at 884-4007 if you need help locating a test.

Most people with mild symptoms can recover at home. Monitor and self-treat your symptoms. Separate yourself from others in the home as much as possible. Wear a face covering to prevent the spread of illness to others in your home. Clean and disinfect all high-touch surfaces every day according to CDC guidance at: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/disinfecting-your-home.html.

Get medical help right away if you have persistent chest pain or pressure, trouble breathing, blue lips, or confusion. Call your healthcare provider for any other symptoms that are severe or concerning. Call 911 if you have a medical emergency. Be sure to tell the operator that you have (or might have) COVID-19. If possible, put on a cloth face covering before medical help arrives.

> *If you were sick and had a positive COVID-19 test or weren't tested, you can leave home when:*
> - It has been at least 10 days since you first had symptoms **AND**
> - You have not had a fever for 1 day (24 hours) without any fever reducing medication **AND**
> - Your other symptoms have improved.
>
> *If you did not have symptoms of COVID-19 but tested positive, you can leave home when:*
> - It has been at least 10 days since your positive test **AND**
> - You continue to have no symptoms since the test.

If you were a close contact to someone with COVID-19, you must self-quarantine at home for up to 14 days after the last exposure. You *may* be allowed to leave quarantine after 10 days if you have no symptoms or after 7 days with a negative test after day 5 and no symptoms, but you must continue to monitor your symptoms daily and strictly follow all prevention steps for 14 days. You can discuss these options for ending quarantine earlier than 14 days on your daily calls for symptom monitoring from public health contact tracing staff.

If you have symptoms of COVID-19 but test negative for the virus and you were NOT identified as a close contact, you may return to work and other activities when you have not had a fever or other symptoms for 24 hours, unless a healthcare provider or local health department requires you to stay home longer.

After you have recovered, remember to WEAR a cloth face covering, WAIT at least 6 feet from other people, and WASH your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Groups of people should be limited to no more than 10 indoors or 25 outdoors, with some exceptions. People at higher risk for severe illness should continue to take additional precautions and stay at home to the extent possible.

FOR HEALTHCARE WORKERS: When you return to work after having symptoms of COVID-19, you must wear a facemask at all times while in the healthcare facility until all symptoms are completely resolved or until 14 days after symptoms first began, whichever is longer. You must also follow strict hand and respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette. You should not care for severely immunocompromised patients (e.g., transplant, hematology-oncology) until 14 days after your symptoms first began. Self monitor for symptoms and seek re-evaluation from your medical provider if symptoms come back or get worse.

GUIDANCE FOR EMPLOYERS

Follow NCDHHS guidance for businesses at https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/guidance#phase-3-easing-of-restrictions.

Check symptoms of all employees daily using the checklist or flowchart at https://transylvaniahealth.org/covid-19-resources. People who have symptoms should immediately be separated from others and sent home.

Call 884-4007 for assistance locating testing. Employers should NOT require a positive COVID-19 test result or a healthcare provider's note for employees who are sick to validate illness, qualify for sick leave, or to return to work.

Businesses that have an employee with COVID-19 are not automatically required to close, but should take steps to prevent the spread of illness to other employees and customers. If a sick person suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 has been in your facility within the past 7 days, follow the cleaning recommendations from the CDC at https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html.

If an employee is *confirmed* to have COVID-19 infection, employers should inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace but maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Close contacts should be sent home and other employees should self-monitor for symptoms for 14 days.

> ***If your employee was sick and had a positive COVID-19 test or wasn't tested, they can return to work when:***
> - It has been at least 10 days since they first had symptoms **AND**
> - They have not had a fever for 1 day (24 hours) without any fever reducing medication **AND**
> - Their other symptoms have improved.
>
> ***If your employee did not have symptoms of COVID-19 but tested positive, they can return to work when:***
> - It has been at least 10 days since their positive test **AND**
> - They continue to have no symptoms since their test.

If your employee was a close contact to someone with COVID-19, they must self-quarantine at home for up to 14 days after the last exposure. They may be allowed to leave quarantine after 10 days with no symptoms reported or after 7 days with a negative test after day 5 and no symptoms reported, but must continue to monitor symptoms daily and strictly follow all prevention steps for 14 days. If an employee has symptoms of COVID-19 but tests negative for the virus and was NOT a close contact, they may return to work when they have not had a fever or other symptoms for 24 hours, unless a healthcare provider or local health department requires them to stay home longer.

FOR HEALTHCARE FACILITIES: Employees who return to work after having symptoms of COVID-19 must wear a facemask at all times while in the facility until all symptoms are completely resolved or until 14 days after symptoms first began, whichever is longer. They must follow strict hand and respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette as usual, and should not care for severely immunocompromised patients (e.g., transplant, hematology-oncology) until 14 days after their symptoms began. Employees should self monitor for symptoms and seek re-evaluation from their medical provider if symptoms come back or get worse.

GUIDANCE FOR HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS

When patients contact you regarding mild to moderate symptoms of COVID-19, please advise them to stay home except to seek medical care and separate themselves from others in their household. You can consider testing for any patient in whom COVID-19 is suspected. Please recommend appropriate self-care treatment options.

Patients should be counseled to call you or call 911 if they have worsening signs or symptoms of respiratory illness (e.g. increasing fever, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, chest discomfort, altered thinking, cyanosis). Healthcare workers with COVID-19 symptoms should notify their occupational health program about their symptoms.

> ***Please advise symptomatic patients with a positive COVID-19 or no test that they can return to work when:***
> - It has been at least 10 days since they first had symptoms **AND**
> - They have been without a fever for 1 day (24 hours) without any fever reducing medication **AND**
> - Their other symptoms have improved.
>
> ***Please advise asymptomic patients with a positive COVID-19 test that they can return to work when:***
> - It has been at least 10 days since their positive test **AND**
> - They continue to have no symptoms since their test.

If a patient was a close contact to someone with COVID-19, they must self-quarantine at home for up to 14 days after the last exposure. They may be allowed to leave quarantine after 10 days with no symptoms reported or after 7 days with a negative test after day 5 and no symptoms reported, but must continue to monitor symptoms daily and strictly follow all prevention steps for 14 days. If an employee has symptoms of COVID-19 but tests negative for the virus and was NOT a close contact, use clinical judgement to determine when they should return to work, but they should stay home for at least 24 hours after fever and symptoms have resolved.

FOR PATIENTS WORKING IN HEALTHCARE SETTINGS: People who have symptoms of COVID-19 can return to work in healthcare settings if they meet the criteria above OR if they have no fever without fever-reducing medicines AND improvement in other symptoms AND two consecutive negative tests collected at least 24 hours apart. Healthcare workers must follow return to work practices and restrictions. See more CDC guidance at https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/return-to-work.html.