TRANSYLVANIA PUBLIC HEALTH

CORONAVIRUS GUIDANCE
Returning to Work   7/29/21

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 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 have symptoms of COVID-19 but tested negative for the virus, you can leave home when:*
> - You have not had a fever for 24 hours without fever-reducing medications and have felt well for 24 hours, unless a healthcare provider requires you to continue to stay home longer.
> *(If you had close contact with someone with COVID-19, you must also meet the criteria below.)*

If you were a close contact to someone with COVID-19, you must quarantine at home for up to 14 days after your last exposure (unless you test positive). Testing is recommended 5-7 days after your last exposure. You *may* be allowed to leave quarantine sooner based on your symptoms and test results; you can discuss these options with public health contact tracing staff. *If quarantine is ended before day 14, you must continue to monitor symptoms daily and strictly follow all prevention steps including wearing a face covering, social distancing, and avoiding groups of people until 14 days have passed.*

If you are fully vaccinated and have no symptoms of COVID-19, you do not need to quarantine after close contact. You should be tested 3-5 days after your last exposure and should wear a face covering until you receive negative test results. You should follow the criteria above if you receive positive test results or develop symptoms of COVID-19. People are considered fully vaccinated 2 weeks after the second dose of a 2-dose vaccine or 2 weeks after a single dose of a 1-dose vaccine.

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#businesses.

Businesses should have their employees self-monitor for symptoms daily. Anyone who has symptoms should immediately be separated from others and sent home. Be sure they are wearing a mask until they leave the facility.

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 had symptoms of COVID-19 but tested negative, they can return to work when:
- They have not had a fever for 24 hours without fever-reducing medications and have felt well for 24 hours, unless a healthcare provider or other health guidance requires them to continue to stay home longer.
  (If they had close contact with someone with COVID-19, they must also meet the criteria below.)

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 (unless they test positive). Testing is recommended 5-7 days after their last exposure. They may be allowed to leave quarantine sooner based on symptoms and test results; they can discuss these options with public health contact tracing staff. *If quarantine is ended before day 14, they must continue to monitor symptoms daily and strictly follow all prevention steps including wearing a face covering, social distancing, and avoiding groups of people until 14 days have passed.*

> **If your employee is fully vaccinated and has no symptoms of COVID-19, they do not need to quarantine after close contact.** They should be tested 3-5 days after their last exposure and should wear a face covering until they receive negative test results. They must follow the criteria above if they receive positive test results or develop symptoms of COVID-19.

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. Testing is recommended 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 and must follow all return-to work practices and restrictions (See more CDC guidance at https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/return-to-work.html..

Please advise symptomatic patients with a positive COVID-19 or no test to remain in home isolation until:
- 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 to remain in home isolation until:
- It has been at least 10 days since their positive test **AND**
- They continue to have no symptoms since their test.

Please advise symptomatic patients with a negative COVID-19 test to remain in home isolation until:
- They have not had a fever for 24 hours without fever-reducing medications and have felt well for 24 hours, unless you recommend that they stay home longer based on symptoms *or they are required to quarantine based on close contact.*

If the 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 (unless they test positive). Testing is recommended 5-7 days after their last exposure. They may be allowed to leave quarantine sooner based on symptoms and test results; they can discuss these options with public health contact tracing staff. *If quarantine is ended before day 14, they must continue to monitor symptoms daily and strictly follow all prevention steps including wearing a face covering, social distancing, and avoiding groups of people until 14 days have passed.*

> **If the patient is fully vaccinated and has no symptoms of COVID-19, they do not need to quarantine after close contact.** They should be tested 3-5 days after their last exposure and should wear a face covering until they receive negative test results. They should follow the criteria above if they receive positive test results or develop symptoms of COVID-19.