

Ministry Updates Recommendations in COVID-19 Quick Reference Public Health Guidance on Testing and Clearance

Update to York Region health care providers as of August 10, 2020

On July 29, 2020, Ontario's Ministry of Health updated the *COVID-19 Quick Reference Public Health Guidance on Testing and Clearance* with additional details for individuals who test positive with a low pre-test probability as well as new guidance for those returning to work in a non-health care setting. Please see below for notable updates, with new additions underlined in the text.

Topic	Updates to New Version
<p>Diagnosing COVID-19: Low pre-test probability scenario added</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All asymptomatic individuals who have a first-time positive test must be managed as if they have current COVID-19 infection in terms of immediate self-isolation until cleared. • <u>A positive result in an asymptomatic individual with low pre-test probability should be retested as soon as possible and may be cleared with a single negative retest, as per the Public Health Management of Cases and Contacts of COVID-19 in Ontario.</u>
<p>Criteria for when to discharge: 72 Hour timeframe specified</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For each scenario, isolation after symptom onset should be for the duration specified provided that the individual is afebrile, and symptoms are improving for at least 72 hours. Absence of cough is not required for those known to have chronic cough or who are experiencing reactive airways post-infection.
<p>Recommendations for Health Care Workers return to work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health care workers (HCWs) should follow isolation and clearance with a non-test-based approach unless they have required hospitalization during the course of their illness, in which case a test based approach <u>may be used at the discretion of the hospital</u>. Some HCWs may be directed to have test-based clearance by their employer/Occupational Health and Safety. • Symptomatic HCWs awaiting testing results must be off work • Asymptomatic HCWs awaiting testing results may continue to work using the appropriate precautions recommended by the facility, which will depend on the reason for testing (<u>i.e., asymptomatic HCW is not on self-isolation following a high-risk exposure</u>) • In exceptional circumstances where clinical care would be severely compromised without additional staffing, an earlier return to work under work self-isolation may be considered <u>for an asymptomatic HCW who is self-isolating due to a high-risk exposure</u>. • In exceptionally rare circumstances where clinical care would be severely compromised without additional staffing, an earlier return to work of a COVID-19 positive HCW <u>that has not been cleared</u> may be considered under work self-isolation recognizing the staff may still be



	<p>infectious. <u>Any COVID-19 positive worker who is, in an exceptionally rare circumstance, being allowed to return to work earlier than would otherwise be the case must not pose a risk to other workers or patients.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work self-isolation means maintaining self-isolation measures outside of work <u>for 14 days of self-isolation for those with high-risk exposures,</u> or 14 days from symptom onset (or 14 days from positive specimen collection date if consistently asymptomatic) <u>for cases,</u> to avoid transmitting to household members or other community contacts. <p>While at work, the HCW should adhere to universal masking recommendations, maintain physical distancing (remaining greater than 2m/6 ft from others) except when providing direct care, and performing meticulous hand hygiene.</p> <p>These measures at work are required to continue until non-test-based clearance (or test based clearance if required by employer/Occupational Health and Safety). The COVID-19 positive HCW should ideally be cohorted to provide care for COVID-19 positive patients/residents if possible.</p> <p>The HCW on work self-isolation should not work in multiple locations.</p>
<p>Table updated to include low pre-test probability scenario</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Symptoms at/around time of testing: Never symptomatic at time of test • Test Result: Positive • Instructions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If there has been a recent potential exposure (e.g., tested as part of an outbreak investigation or other close contact to a case), work self-isolation (i.e., return to work) could start after a minimum of 72 hours from the positive specimen collection date to ensure symptoms have not developed in that time, as the positive result may represent early identification of virus in the pre-symptomatic period ○ If <u>there is a low pre-test probability</u> (e.g., there has been no known recent potential exposures such as tested as part of surveillance and no other cases detected in the facility or on the unit/floor, depending on the facility size), <u>see Public Health Management of Cases and Contacts of COVID-19 in Ontario for repeat testing guidance.</u> If follow-up testing is negative, the HCW is cleared and can return to work as per usual.
<p>Recommendations for return to work in non-health care settings:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Return to work for workers who are confirmed or probable cases and work in non-health care settings requires clearance as outlined earlier in this document and in the Public Health Management of Cases and Contacts of COVID-19 in Ontario guidance.</u> • Workers are not required to provide proof of a negative test result to their employers in order to return to work. <u>It is expected that workers who have tested positive abide by public health direction and advice on when they would be considered clear to return to work.</u> • <u>Return to work for workers who are self-isolating due to a high-risk exposure can occur after the end of their self-isolation period.</u> • <u>Work self-isolation should NOT be considered for confirmed or probable COVID-19 cases in non-healthcare setting (including</u>

	<p><u>asymptomatic positive workers within their isolation period), for large workplace outbreaks, for large numbers of exposed workers in a given workplace, or for any worker linked to an outbreak where workers also live in a congregate living setting.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>There may be exceptional circumstances where the Public Health Unit may consider work self-isolation for workers who are in self-isolation from a high-risk exposure, excluding the scenarios outlined above. This should be done in consultation with the Ministry Emergency Operations Centre, Public Health Ontario. Work self-isolation is generally not recommended for any workers in non-health care settings due to the potential for contacts with high risk exposures to be infectious, and barriers to ensuring appropriate and consistent infection prevention and control measures to prevent transmission</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <u>Considerations for exceptional circumstances should include: health and safety, and ethical and equity considerations (including with respect to whether the worker(s) serve a “critical” function, and promoting the wellbeing of and minimizing the harm to workers and the community); minimizing risk related to transportation to and from work (e.g., no carpooling / ride-sharing or public transit use); alternatives to work-self isolation (e.g., work from home, alternate staff); availability of Occupational Health or other similar resources that can support training and monitoring of PPE and non-medical mask usage, and other barriers to effective implementation of IPAC measures required for work self-isolation, including barriers to symptom screening, physical distancing, and appropriate PPE use and masking for source control. Employers must take into consideration the safety of other workers and compliance with the OHSA to ensure that the return of any worker is safe for both the returning worker and others in the workplace.</u>
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For more information

York Region Public Health will continue to provide health care professionals with the latest information on Ministry guidance as the COVID-19 pandemic progresses. If you have questions about COVID-19, call our dedicated health professional COVID-19 line at **1-877-464-9675 ext. 77280** (8:30 a.m. to 6 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.