ETSU Health Clinical Employee Return to Work Protocol

Purpose:

Coronavirus Disease-19 is a disease caused by the strain of coronavirus Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)-CoV-2 that can produce mild to very severe illness and manifests in a wide range of symptoms.

The primary goal of this protocol is to maintain the safety and health of all ETSU faculty, staff and learners.

This protocol applies to faculty and staff who work in clinical environments within ETSU Health and are considered essential healthcare workers by the CDC. Please note that students, including students in clinical disciplines, are not considered essential healthcare workers, and should follow the protocol for QCOM students (Quillen College of Medicine Students) or the protocol for ETSU Students, Faculty and Staff (all other students). Residents and fellows should follow the protocol entitled ETSU Health Residents and Fellows. If you are unsure whether you are considered an essential healthcare worker, please contact your supervisor.

Symptoms of COVID-19 may 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
- Diarrhea

If you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, do not report to work or class.

If suspected COVID-19 Illness or concern for exposure and testing is desired:

- Call one of the following:
  - Washington County Health Department at 423-975-2200
  - Personal primary care provider
  - ETSU Health (Internal Medicine or Family Medicine) to establish care

- Seek emergency medical care immediately if experiencing severe symptoms, such as any of the following:
  - Trouble breathing
Persistent chest pain or pressure
Confusion
Inability to awaken or stay awake
Bluish lips
Any symptoms that are severe or personally concerning

Return to Work Protocol

1. Confirmed COVID-19 illness with symptoms:

Must be excluded from all work activities until:

- At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared
- AND at least 24 hours have passed since last fever without the use of fever-reducing medications
- AND symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath) have improved

It is the responsibility of the employee to monitor temperature at least twice daily and symptoms.

People who have tested positive for COVID-19 do not need to quarantine or get tested again for up to 3 months as long as they do not develop symptoms again. People who develop symptoms again within 3 months of their first bout of COVID-19 may need to be tested again if there is no other cause identified for their symptoms.

2. Laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 but have not had any symptoms (asymptomatic):

Must be excluded from all work activities until:

- At least 10 days have passed since date of first positive COVID-19 diagnostic test
- AND have not subsequently developed symptoms since the positive test
- IF symptoms develop, please follow the above protocol for Confirmed COVID-19 illness with symptoms

If an alternate diagnosis is determined for the symptoms, criteria for return to work should be based on that diagnosis.

Any questions regarding testing or symptoms should be directed to the employee’s primary care provider. If the employee does not have a primary care provider, he or she may call ETSU Internal Medicine or ETSU Family Medicine to establish care.
People who have tested positive for COVID-19 do not need to quarantine or get tested again for up to 3 months as long as they do not develop symptoms again. People who develop symptoms again within 3 months of their first bout of COVID-19 may need to be tested again if there is no other cause identified for their symptoms.

3. **Potential exposure to COVID-19 (also known as “close contact”):**

“Potential exposure” (also known as “close contact”) is defined as being *within 6 feet for more than 15 total minutes within the last 24 hours* of a person who has had a confirmed positive test COVID-19. This includes exposure with the infected person going back 48 hours prior to the time the positive test was collected, OR 48 hours prior to the time the positive contact showed symptoms, whichever is earlier.

a. For essential healthcare workers (HCW) including faculty, residents and fellows:

- As HCW are considered essential employees, they may be permitted to continue working after an exposure in certain circumstances, per TDH guidance.\(^1\)
- If both the HCW and the infected person were wearing masks throughout the encounter, the HCW may return to work and self-monitor for symptoms, including taking his or her temperature twice per day for 14 days.
- HCW must continue to wear a mask at all times.
- Outside of work, HCW must quarantine for 14 days AND maintain physical distancing of at least 6 feet from others at all times.
- If either the HCW or the infected person was *not* wearing a mask throughout the encounter, the HCW should quarantine at home for 14 days after the last exposure.

b. For ETSU Health employees who work in a non-clinical environment: see protocol entitled Faculty, Staff and Student.

c. People who have tested positive for COVID-19 do not need to quarantine or get tested again for up to 3 months as long as they do not develop symptoms again. People who develop symptoms again within 3 months of their first bout of COVID-19 may need to be tested again if there is no other cause identified for their symptoms.

4. **Household Contacts**

A household contact is an individual who shares any living spaces with someone who has a confirmed positive case of COVID-19. This includes bedrooms, bathrooms, living rooms, kitchens, etc.

- Household contacts must be quarantined for 14 days after the case has completed their (minimum) 10-day isolation period (whether the case is symptomatic or not).
If a household contact develops symptoms of COVID-19, they become a case. They should begin isolation as a case and consider getting tested.

If the case can separate from household members for their entire isolation, household members may be treated as non-household contacts and begin quarantine after their last close contact with the case.

For more information, see here.

Questions? Call the Washington County Health Department at 423-975-2200, or Ballad Health Nurse Connect at 1-833-822-5523.

Updated 11/06/2020

References: