

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.

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.

- For essential Healthcare workers (HCW) including faculty, staff, residents, and fellows:
 - As HCW are considered essential employees, they may be permitted to continue working after an exposure in certain circumstances, per [CDC guidance](#). This guidance applies to HCW with potential exposure in a healthcare setting to patients, visitors, or other HCW with confirmed COVID-19.
 - 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.
 - If the infected person was *not* wearing a mask, but the HCW was wearing a mask **and** eye protection **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.
- If the above criteria are met and a HCW is allowed to continue working after an exposure, he or she must continue to wear a mask at all times and maintain social distancing at work.
- If the above criteria are met and a HCW is allowed to continue working after an exposure, the HCW must still quarantine outside of work for 10 days, monitor symptoms for 14 days after the last exposure, AND maintain physical distancing of at least 6 feet from others at all times.
- If the above criteria are not met, the HCW should **not** continue to work, but rather should quarantine at home for 10 days after the last exposure, and continue to monitor symptoms for 14 days after the last exposure, **unless the HCW is vaccinated (see #4 below)**.
- If the above criteria are not met, and the HCW quarantines, and the HCW is not fully vaccinated, the HCW may be released from quarantine after 10 days only if he or she remains asymptomatic for the entire 10 days after the last exposure.

Monitoring for symptoms must continue for 14 days after the last exposure. If the HCW develops symptoms at any point in the 10 day quarantine, he or she should begin isolation as a case and consider getting a COVID test.

- For ETSU Health employees who work in a non-clinical environment: see protocol entitled Faculty, Staff, and Student
- 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. Potential exposure to COVID-19 (also known as “close contact”) for vaccinated persons:

- Vaccinated persons with an exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 are not required to quarantine if they meet all of the following criteria:
 - Are fully vaccinated (i.e., ≥ 2 weeks following receipt of the second dose in a 2-dose series, or ≥ 2 weeks following receipt of one dose of a single-dose vaccine)
 - Are within 3 months following receipt of the last dose in the series
 - Have remained asymptomatic since the current COVID-19 exposure

5. 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 10 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 a household contact is able to separate themselves from the confirmed positive case, they must quarantine for 10 days after their last exposure, and continue to monitor symptoms for 14 days after the last exposure.
- A household contact may be released from quarantine after 10 days only if he or she remains asymptomatic for the entire 10 days after the last exposure. Monitoring for symptoms must continue for 14 days after the last exposure.
- For more information, see [here](#).

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

Updated 02/11/2021

References:

February 11, 2021

ETSU Health

1. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-risk-assesment-hcp.html>
2. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/disposition-in-home-patients.html>
3. <https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/health/documents/cedep/novel-coronavirus/Isolation-QuarantineRelease.pdf>
4. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/contact-tracing/contact-tracing-plan/appendix.html#contact>
5. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine.html>
6. <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/info-by-product/clinical-considerations.html>