IMPORTANT NOTE

This document is meant to provide guidance to the NM workforce on what to do if you have symptoms of an acute respiratory illness or have a known infection, and/or to help you understand the return-to-work guidelines after an illness.

Tests ordered through this process are billed through your personal insurance unless prompted by a confirmed workplace exposure. Test results will be part of your personal medical record and shared with Occupational Health.

If you have new onset of COVID-19 or Influenza-Like-Illness symptoms

1. DO NOT COME TO WORK.
   - If at an NM facility, stop work and remove yourself from the workplace.
   - Notify your supervisor per your departmental procedures.

2. FILL OUT THE RESPIRATORY VIRUS QUESTIONNAIRE AND GET TESTED.
   - If you already have a positive test: Report it under the “New Positive Test” section.
   - If you need to be tested: Complete the “New Symptoms” section and a COVID-19* PCR test will be ordered.

IF YOU TEST POSITIVE FOR COVID-19

- A positive at-home test will be accepted.
- If you already have a positive test, report it through the Respiratory Virus Questionnaire.
- Notify your supervisor that you have been instructed to stay home.
- You must isolate at home.
- After you complete the RVQ, you will get an email with return-to-work instructions that follow the guidelines on page 3.

IF YOU TEST NEGATIVE FOR COVID-19

- If you take an at-home or lab-based rapid test and the result is negative, you must get a PCR test for confirmation.
- If you have a fever, stay home until you have no fever for 24 hours without the use of medications.
- If you have respiratory symptoms, stay home until they have significantly improved without the use of medication.
- If you work on a high-risk unit, you also must test negative for flu prior to returning to work before Day 8.

*Immunocompromised individuals and those working on high-risk units will also be tested for flu during flu season. If you are immunocompromised and either test is positive, please contact your primary care team for treatment options.

Employees who are out for three or more days in a row should apply for FMLA through Sedgwick. If you are applying for a leave of absence due to COVID-19 illness, you will need to get a PCR test or a lab-based rapid antigen test ordered by a medical professional or pharmacy.

View your test results on the MyNM® app
If you were exposed to COVID-19 at work

1. **COMPLETE THE RESPIRATORY VIRUS QUESTIONNAIRE** if all of the following are true:
   - Exposure occurred during the course of your job tasks.
   - You were within six feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period when not wearing appropriate PPE.

2. **BEGIN THE TESTING PROTOCOL**, which includes up to three PCR tests that will be ordered for you after you complete the questionnaire.
   Start at the test that aligns with how long ago you were exposed:
   - First test should occur one day (not earlier than 24 hours) after exposure; if the exposure is not known right away, then skip to the second test.
   - Second test should occur three days after the exposure (48 hours after first test).
   - Third test should occur five days after the exposure (48 hours after second test). This may be completed up to 10 days after exposure.

3. **CONTINUE TO WORK if asymptomatic** and follow the below precautions:
   - While at work, you must wear a respirator or tight-fitting surgical mask at all times through Day 10.* Sit at least 6 feet apart from others before removing your mask to eat or drink.
   - If you develop symptoms or test positive for COVID-19, you must stay home from work and complete the **RESPIRATORY VIRUS QUESTIONNAIRE** to report your symptoms or positive test.

If you were exposed to COVID-19 in the community, at home or via travel

1. **CONTINUE TO WORK if asymptomatic** and follow the below precautions:
   - While at work, you must wear a respirator or tight-fitting surgical mask at all times through Day 10.* Sit at least 6 feet apart from others before removing your mask to eat or drink.

2. **COMPLETE THE TESTING PROTOCOL** on your own or through your healthcare professional:
   - If you were exposed in the community or at home where the infected person was able to isolate: Test on **Day 5** after your last known exposure.
   - If you have ongoing exposure to an infected person at home who cannot isolate: Test on **Day 5** and again on **Day 15** after your household contact’s symptom onset/positive test.
   - If you are exposed when traveling: See CDC Guidelines for Travel.

For more information, go to CDC guidelines for COVID-19 exposures.

If you develop symptoms or test positive for COVID-19, you must stay home from work and complete the **RESPIRATORY VIRUS QUESTIONNAIRE**.

*Day 0 is the last day of exposure.
If you did not complete the **RESPIRATORY VIRUS QUESTIONNAIRE** at the onset of your symptoms or to report your positive test, please do so now. Staff who are immunocompromised must follow return-to-work guidelines outlined on page 4.

### 1 MEET THE FOLLOWING SYMPTOM CRITERIA.
- Remain fever-free for 24 hours without fever-reducing medication.
- Respiratory-like symptoms are significantly improved without the use of medication.

### 2 MEET THE ILLNESS-SPECIFIC CRITERIA as outlined below.

**COVID-19+ return-to-work: Staff who are not immunocompromised**
- Completed the five-day COVID-19 isolation period.*
- Upon returning to work, you must wear a respirator or tight-fitting surgical mask at all times through Day 10. Sit at least 6 feet apart from others before removing your mask to eat or drink.
- You cannot work with patients who are immunocompromised until Day 11.

If you meet the criteria outlined above and need to provide care to patients who are immunocompromised before Day 11, a return-to-work testing option is available as outlined below:
- Take a return-to-work COVID-19 test via at-home antigen or lab-based test on Day 5 or later once symptom criteria has been met.

- **ONE NEGATIVE FOLLOW-UP TEST RESULT:** You can provide care to patients who are immunocompromised as early as Day 6.

**IF YOUR FOLLOW-UP COVID-19 TEST IS POSITIVE:**
- Do not return to work before Day 11 unless you test negative. You may test daily until the test is negative.
- You can return to work on Day 11 without additional testing as long as you meet the symptom criteria above.

**SEASONAL FLU AND OTHER INFLUENZA-LIKE ILLNESS (ILI) return-to-work**
- If you work on a high-risk unit and had a positive flu test, you must meet the symptom criteria above, and you cannot work with immunocompromised patients on a high-risk unit until Day 8. No additional testing is required.
- All other staff must meet the symptom criteria above before returning to work. No additional follow-up testing is required.

*Day 0 is the day of symptom onset, or the date of the positive test, whichever comes first.
^ See page 5 for list of high-risk units.

Visit the **Respiratory Virus/COVID-19 Hub on NM Interactive** for more information and for the latest version of this document.
Return-to-work after positive test for staff who are immunocompromised

If you did not complete the RESPIRATORY VIRUS QUESTIONNAIRE at the onset of your symptoms, or to report your positive test, please do so now. Staff who are not immunocompromised must follow the return-to-work guidelines outlined on page 3.

**1 MEET THE FOLLOWING SYMPTOM CRITERIA.**
- Remain fever-free for 24 hours without fever-reducing medication.
- Respiratory-like symptoms are significantly improved without the use of medication.

**2 MEET THE ILLNESS-SPECIFIC CRITERIA** as outlined below.

**COVID-19+ return-to-work:** Staff who are immunocompromised or those who had severe or critical illness from COVID-19
- Completed the 10-day COVID-19 isolation period.*
- You will need to take two lab-based rapid or PCR tests, 48 hours apart, on Day 8 or after.
  - If you are significantly better without fever, you can test on Day 8 and Day 10.
  - If you still have symptoms on Day 8, start testing when you are significantly better.

WHEN YOU HAVE TWO NEGATIVE FOLLOW-UP TEST RESULTS: You can return to work. The second test should not be before Day 10. You can return as early as Day 11. Tests must be 48 hours apart.

**IF EITHER OF YOUR FOLLOW-UP COVID-19 TESTS IS POSITIVE:**
- You cannot return to work. You can test daily until two consecutive tests are negative. The tests must be 48 hours apart.
- If you have completed the isolation period and cannot return to work due to ongoing symptoms or positive tests, please complete the RESPIRATORY VIRUS QUESTIONNAIRE for additional guidance.

**SEASONAL FLU AND OTHER INFLUENZA-LIKE ILLNESS (ILI) return-to-work**
- If you work on a high-risk unit and had a positive flu test, you must meet the symptom criteria above, and you cannot work with immunocompromised patients on a high-risk unit until Day 8. No additional testing is required.
- All other staff must meet the symptom criteria above before returning to work. No additional follow-up testing is required.

*Day 0 is the day of symptom onset or the date of the positive test, whichever comes first.
+ See page 5 for list of high-risk units.

**If you work fully remote**
If you work fully remote and never come onsite for work, you do not have to fill out the Respiratory Virus Questionnaire if you develop COVID-19 or Influenza-Like Illness symptoms. Testing is not needed to return to remote work. You may resume work when you are feeling able.
DEFINITIONS

Exposure: Being within 6 feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period, when not wearing appropriate PPE.

High-risk units: Applies to the following units on the NMH campus: All ICU and transplant units including Prentice 14, 15, and 16; Feinberg 11E and 14E; and Galter 10 and 12. Additional NM hospital units can be designated high-risk by Infection Prevention.

Immunocompromised: Individuals that meet one of the CDC-defined criteria. This may include individuals undergoing chemotherapy, taking a daily steroid for more than 14 days, or taking other medications that suppress the immune system.

Day 0: The day of symptom onset, or the date of the positive test, whichever comes first.

Influenza-Like Illness (ILI) symptoms: Fever, cough, sore throat, nasal congestion or runny nose, muscle or body aches.

COVID-19 symptoms: Fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, nasal congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, and diarrhea.

Severe or critical illness due to COVID-19: Check with your care team if you were hospitalized to see if this applies to you. Based on SARS-CoV-2 Illness Severity Criteria (adapted from the NIH COVID-19 Treatment Guidelines).

COVID-19 TEST TYPES

Antigen: Tests for virus proteins. Most accurate when a person has symptoms and/or a high level of virus. You can collect the sample and perform the test at home. Results are available quickly; tests are read within 15 minutes. Reference COVID-19 FAQs on how to obtain at-home tests.

PCR: Tests genetic material from the virus. Can be positive in patients without symptoms or those with lower levels of virus. A healthcare worker collects the sample, and the test is performed in a laboratory. Results may take 24 hours or longer to return.

COUNTING DAYS

Day 0 is the day of symptom onset, or the date of positive test, whichever comes first. In the table below, purple indicates it is a day that occurs in the following week (Saturday – Friday).

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