

# EXPOSURE TO COVID-19 IN THE WORKPLACE- Q & A



This Q & A document provides direction for both leaders and staff when there is an exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace.

QUESTIONS	DIRECTIONS <i>(will be updated as required)</i>
<p><b>What is exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workplace exposure to the corona virus from a symptomatic patient or staff member (less than 2 meter apart) in the absence of adequate personal protective equipment (PPE)</li> <li>• Transmission is through person to person contact, respiratory droplets on objects contaminated with the coronavirus with the consideration of potential fecal-oral transmission</li> <li>• In persons who develop symptoms, the period of communicability is considered to be from 48 hours prior to onset of symptoms to 10 days after onset of symptoms</li> <li>• Whenever Island Health confirms a positive case of COVID-19 within our facilities, including Community Health, a risk assessment is completed to determine who may have been exposed</li> <li>• Following the risk assessment, contact tracing of exposed employees will begin</li> </ul>
<p><b>Who determines the risk of exposure and initiates post-exposure follow up?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A team comprised of Infection Prevention Control, Communicable Disease Nurses, Medical Health Officers, Epidemiologist, work together to determine risk of exposure <b>See BC Centre for Disease Control Health Care Worker Risk Assessment for COVID-19 Exposures</b> <a href="http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Professionals-Site/Documents/COVID19_HCW_RecommendationsRiskAssessmentExposures.pdf">http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Professionals-Site/Documents/COVID19_HCW_RecommendationsRiskAssessmentExposures.pdf</a></li> <li>• The Provincial Workplace Health Call Centre (PWHCC) will notify the leader/designate</li> <li>• The leader/designate will <b>provide immediate risk mitigation to staff</b> and will compile a list of exposed employees to forward to the Provincial Workplace Health Call Centre (PWHCC)</li> </ul>

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<p><b>It is outside the working hours of Public Health, Infection Prevention Control and OHS Employee Health Advisor and there has been an exposure.</b></p> <p><b>As a leader/designate, what do I do?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The leader/designate will initiate the immediate risk mitigation directions, seen below, for asymptomatic employees</li> <li>• The leader/designate will ask the site switchboard for the Medical Microbiologist on call ( IPAC)</li> <li>• The Provincial Workplace Health Call Centre will initiate the notification of exposure to leaders/designates as per the process outlined below</li> </ul>
<p><b>I am asymptomatic (no symptoms)</b></p> <p><b>Can I continue to work?</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Immediate Risk Mitigation Directions (Asymptomatic)</b></p> <p>If you are asymptomatic you can come to work wearing a mask x 14 days at all times (if not already wearing one as per PPE guidelines) including these additional precautions while working:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow infection prevention and control protocols including diligent hand hygiene and the use of personal protective equipment when delivering patient care;</li> <li>• Reduce close contact with other health care workers and avoid shared spaces where possible;</li> <li>• Avoid close contact with others when travelling to and from work and between shifts; and</li> <li>• Self-monitor for symptoms using the <a href="#">BC COVID-19 Symptom Self-Assessment Tool</a></li> <li>• Self-isolate at home on days when not required at work;</li> <li>• <b><i>If an employee is identified by Communicable Disease and/or the Provincial Workplace Health Call Centre (PWHCC) as a high risk close contact, they will be provided additional direction regarding self isolation</i></b></li> </ul>
<p><b>I have developed respiratory symptoms, fever and gastro intestinal symptoms post exposure?</b></p> <p><b>Should I continue working?</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Immediate Risk Mitigation Directions (Symptomatic)</b></p> <p><b>I have developed symptoms while at home:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notify your leader/designate</li> <li>• Stay at home and continue to self isolate</li> <li>• Report your symptoms to the Provincial Workplace Health Call Centre (PWHCC)</li> <li>• <b>If you are suffering from respiratory symptoms, you can <a href="#">self-refer to a clinic</a> for testing</b></li> </ul>

## What if I test positive for COVID-19?

- You will be contacted by a Public Health Communicable Disease Nurse who will provide you with directions. They will also investigate where and when you worked, and help determine others you may have had close contact with.
- You will be asked to self-isolate for a further 10 days from onset of symptoms. However if you have symptoms indicating you are still sick with an illness other than COVID-19, you should remain isolated at home until symptoms cease. Coughing may persist for several weeks, so a cough alone does not mean you need to continue to self-isolate for more than 10 days.
- See HR FAQs for additional information [HR FAQ document](#)

## What if I test negative and continue to have symptoms?

- If you are experiencing cold or flu-like symptoms after receiving a negative COVID-19 test result, you are required to stay home for **five (5) days from when your symptoms began** – or until signs and symptoms have resolved – whichever is sooner. Resolution of symptoms include being without a fever (without the use of fever-reducing medication). If there is a residual cough remaining, you can return to work and a mask should be worn during the shift.
- If you are experiencing gastrointestinal illness (nausea, diarrhea, fever, vomiting, malaise) please stay home until you are 48 hours symptom-free. This applies to staff/medical staff who have been tested for COVID-19 and received a negative result, AND for staff/medical staff who are off work with an illness that did not meet the criteria for a COVID test.
- If you are considered a high-risk exposure, Public Health will provide direction, which may include, up to a 14 day self-isolation period before returning to work is permissible.
- See HR FAQs for additional information [HR FAQ document](#)

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<p><b>What is the process to report an exposure to the Provincial Workplace Health Call Centre (PWHCC)?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infection Prevention and Control or Public Health Communicable Disease will notify Occupational Health and Safety and the Provincial Workplace Health Call Centre (PWHCC) of a confirmed COVID-19 case, only if potential employee exposures have been identified</li> <li>• The Provincial Workplace Health Call Centre (PWHCC) will then notify leaders/designates of all affected units</li> <li>• The leaders/designates will provide a list of exposed staff to the Provincial Workplace Health Call Centre (PWHCC)</li> <li>• If you were exposed, you will be contacted by your leader/designate and the follow up process will be communicated to you</li> <li>• As per the direction of your leader/designate, you will contact the Provincial Workplace Health Call Centre (PWHCC) for assessment and further direction</li> </ul> <p><i>Please note</i> – This notification applies to Health Authority employees only. Physicians not employed by a Health Authority, students and contracted employees need to follow up with Public Health Communicable Disease.</p>
<p><b>How is my time off coded if I have to be off work as result of this exposure?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the <a href="#">HR FAQ document</a> for questions and answers about general leave</li> <li>• Leaders and staff may contact <a href="#">HR Access Help Line</a> for further consultation now available seven days a week</li> </ul>
<p><b>I have medical documents suggesting I should be off work? What do I do?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff must contact <a href="mailto:DMPC@viha.ca">DMPC@viha.ca</a> to work with OH&amp;S Disability Management</li> <li>• Forward any/all medical documentation to the same email address</li> </ul>
<p><b>How can I keep myself and my family safe?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mask Policy</b>= <a href="https://intranet.viha.ca/covid-19/Documents/mask-policy.pdf">https://intranet.viha.ca/covid-19/Documents/mask-policy.pdf</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Temporary Staff Accommodation</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">BC Centre for Disease Control: Common Questions about COVID-19</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Direct Care Worker Safety Guide COVID-19</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">COVID-19: Scrub, Uniform, Work Wear Guidelines</a> (Acute Care)</li> <li>• <a href="#">BC COVID-19 Symptom Self-Assessment Tool</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Physical Distancing</a></li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Talking with children about Coronavirus Disease</a>: Messages for parents, school staff, and others working with children</li></ul>
<p><b>I am feeling stress and anxiety - what Employee Supports are available?</b></p>	<p>Island Health employees are our most valuable resource and it is integral to protect and/or promote the psychosocial well-being and resilience of our staff. There is a variety of key psychosocial supports available:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Homewood Health</a> (EFAP provider) offers enhanced programs, including specialized depression, anxiety and trauma care until June 30, 2020</li><li>• <a href="#">Spiritual Health Program</a></li><li>• Staff Peer Support Line <a href="tel:250-739-5883">250-739-5883</a>, provides information, crisis support and referrals</li><li>• <a href="#">Physician's Health Program</a></li><li>• The BC Psychological Association provides <a href="#">free mental wellness support</a> to any nurse in BC</li><li>• Starling Minds <a href="#">Managing Stress and Anxiety from COVID-19</a> (online self-paced CBT program)</li><li>• <a href="#">LifeSpeak</a> digital wellness platform (password: lifespeak)</li></ul>