

COVID-19 Exposure, Infection and Return-to-Work Frequently Asked Questions

Exposure (after being fully immunized):

When is someone fully immunized?

An individual is considered fully immunized against COVID-19 after 14 days following the second dose in a 2-dose COVID-19 vaccine series or greater than 14 days following receipt of one dose of a single-dose COVID-19 vaccine.

Do fully immunized, asymptomatic individuals who are involved in a COVID-19 close contact (including household) exposure need to stay home from work?

No, but the exposed employee needs to adhere to the following guidance:

- If a household exposure, fill out the survey at redcap.vanderbilt.edu/surveys/?s=439KJ8MHKL.
- If notified by Occ Health that they had a work exposure, fill out the survey sent to them via email.
- Always wear a procedural/surgical mask while at VUMC.
- Do not eat/drink around others.
- Monitor for symptoms of active COVID-19 infection and get tested if you become symptomatic.
- If household exposure, we will test you at day 7 after your household contact's symptom onset and, if your test is positive, you will need to stay home from work.

If fully immunized individuals develop clinical symptoms associated with COVID-19, do they need to undergo COVID-19 testing and undergo isolation?

Yes. If you are fully vaccinated and you develop symptoms consistent with COVID-19, you should be tested and isolate while awaiting the results as, although it is uncommon, even fully vaccinated persons can develop COVID-19 infection.

**Employees at VUMC
Regional Hospitals should
contact their Employee
Health Office in their Quality
Building or call:
VWCH: 615-443-2581
VBCH: 931-685-8404
VTHH: 931-393-7944**

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Exposure (if not fully immunized):

My spouse/child/roommate/friend/etc. was in contact with someone who was positive. What do I do?

If you are the “contact of a contact”, then there is nothing further you need to do. Monitor for symptoms and if you develop fever, cough, shortness of breath, sudden loss of sense of smell/taste (without other neurologic symptoms), diarrhea, headache, sore throat, muscle aches, or chills, go to a VUMC testing site.

I was exposed to someone in the community. What do I do?

If you were exposed in the community (and do not live with the individual who tested positive) you can continue to work. You must wear a surgical/procedure mask for 14 days from exposure.

I live with a person who has tested positive for COVID-19 and I cannot quarantine from them. What should I do?

Complete the survey for household exposures for 14 days (even if allowed to end quarantine earlier than this) from when you were exposed: redcap.vanderbilt.edu/surveys/?s=439KJ8MHKL

If you are fully vaccinated, you do not need to quarantine from the positive individual.

If you are not fully vaccinated and are not able to quarantine from the positive household individual (e.g., a small child), your quarantine begins after the infected individual meets the following criteria:

- 10 days from the symptom onset,
- fever-free without fever-reducing medicine for 24 hours, and
- their symptoms improve.

Once you begin your quarantine, if you are **asymptomatic** on Day 7, Occ Health will notify you via the daily symptom monitoring survey that a COVID-19 test order has been placed and **you need to get tested at a VUMC testing site** (see below for locations). If your test is negative, Occ Health will notify you to return to work.

If you become **symptomatic**, you need to get tested at a VUMC testing site. If your test is negative, you will need a second test ordered by Occ Health before you can return to work.

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My coworker tested positive. What do I need to do?

Exposure is defined as being within 6 feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period while one/both individuals are not wearing PPE appropriate to the encounter (e.g. surgical masks in clinical buildings/areas) and:

- while the individual is symptomatic
- during the 48 hours leading up to symptoms
- 48 hours before positive test in an asymptomatic individual

Individuals who are deemed “exposed” will be notified by Occupational Health and should complete the surveys sent to them. They can work if fully vaccinated, but must wear a surgical/procedure mask (not a cloth mask) for 14 days from exposure. Individuals who are not fully vaccinated need to stay home and quarantine, with testing on day 7 to determine if can return to work. If you feel that you were exposed, you should submit a First Report of Injury via VERITAS (veritas.app.vumc.org). If you develop symptoms, present to a VUMC testing site for evaluation.

Do I need to get tested if I was exposed?

Currently, VUMC does not require testing asymptomatic individuals immediately after an exposure to a person with COVID-19 for work purposes, with the exception of the testing that allows a shortened quarantine for household exposures or unvaccinated unprotected co-worker exposures noted below.

If you have been exposed, a negative test does not preclude a positive test further along the 14-day incubation period. If you are asymptomatic and get tested (by Metro Public Health Department, for example), you may be at work while awaiting test results. Also, lab results obtained at Tennessee Department of Health assessment sites will not appear in eStar and will be handled by TDH.

I have COVID symptoms. What do I do now?

If you are symptomatic and are awaiting test results, you must remain home until the test result comes back. If your test is negative, you can return to work as long you have been fever-free for 24 hours without a fever-reducing medication. If you have respiratory symptoms, you should wear a surgical/procedure mask when at work. If you tested positive, you must remain at home. If you tested at VUMC, Occ Health will call you. If you tested outside of the VUMC system, please upload your outside test result at: redcap.vanderbilt.edu/surveys/?s=CACNP8CW3C.

Once you begin your quarantine for a household exposure or an unprotected work exposure, if you remain asymptomatic, on Day 7, Occ Health will notify you via the daily symptom monitoring survey that a COVID-19 test order has been placed and you need to get tested at a VUMC testing site. If your test is negative, Occ Health will notify you to return to work.

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I am pregnant/immunocompromised. Do you have special recommendations?

We do not have a specific policy; however, it is even more important for you to follow the general recommendations of meticulous hand hygiene, not touching your eyes, nose, or mouth, wearing a mask when in public, and social distancing. Pregnant, immunocompromised, or other employees with high-risk conditions can call Employee & Labor Relations to discuss exemptions and accommodations at 615-343-4759 or email employeerelations.vumc@vumc.org.

Can I get tested if I have no symptoms (asymptomatic)?

[Testing site information](#) at VUMC can be found on the COVID website. This includes information for pre-procedural, symptomatic, and asymptomatic locations.

I have symptoms of COVID-19, what do I do?

If you have new-onset symptoms (i.e., within the past week), you should not go to work and go to a VUMC test site.

Where are the VUMC test sites?

VUMC sites include Glenrose site at 214 Glenrose Ave, Nashville, TN 37210; Vanderbilt Health Walk-In Clinics, and Vanderbilt Health Clinics at Walgreens. Walk-In Clinic locations can be found at myhealthwalkin.com. For individuals who develop symptoms while at work on the main campus, Occ Health Express Care Clinic on the 1st Floor of Medical Arts Building is also available.

My results are pending, can I work?

- If you are symptomatic and were tested for COVID-19, you need to stay at home until those results come back.
 - If you went for testing but do not have any symptoms, you may return to work.
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Clearance to Return to Work after COVID 19

I tested positive for COVID-19. What do I do?

Most vaccinated individuals can return to work after 5 to 10 days from symptom onset, as long as symptoms are improving. Symptom onset date is day zero.

If you are unvaccinated you must wait until day 11 to return to work. Occ Health will send you a REDCap Survey (tinyurl.com/Day5-RTW) by day 5 to guide your return to work. Upon return, you cannot work with severely immunocompromised patients (e.g., hem-onc and transplant) until after day 10.

You get a follow-up test and it is negative:

- If you are not immunosuppressed
 - your follow-up test must be collected on Day 4 or later.
 - you cannot return to work until after Day 5 after symptom onset [at the earliest]

Defining Your "Days" [Not Immunosuppressed]

- Symptoms Started, Day Zero → Jan 1
- Add 5 Days → Jan 6
- Earliest return to work date → Jan 7

- If you are immunosuppressed
 - your follow-up test must be collected on Day 9 or later.
 - you cannot return to work until after Day 10 after symptom onset [at the earliest]

Defining Your "Days" [Immunosuppressed]

- Day Zero → Jan 1 the day symptoms started
- Add 10 Days → Jan 11
- Earliest return to work date → Jan 12

- If you get a follow-up test and it is positive, you cannot return to work and you can test daily until the test is negative or you meet the ***If you do not get a follow-up test*** criteria.
- PCR and home antigen tests will be accepted for return to work. PCR tests can be obtained the Glenrose testing site.

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If you do not get a follow-up test:

- If you are vaccinated and not immunosuppressed, you cannot return to work until after day 7 [at the earliest] after symptom onset.
- If you are unvaccinated and not immunosuppressed, you cannot return to work until after day 10 [at the earliest] after symptom onset.
- If you are immunosuppressed, you cannot return to work until after day 20 [at the earliest] after symptom onset regardless vaccination status.

If you tested outside of the VUMC system:

- If you tested outside of the VUMC system, upload your outside test result to:
redcap.vanderbilt.edu/surveys/?s=CACNP8CW3C
- Occ Health will then call you to followup and review next steps regarding return to work.
- Contact Occu Health at 615-936-0955 or occupational.health.clinic@vumc.org if you don't have documentation or if you have other questions or need assistance. (Do not send personal medical information via email.)

If you tested within the VUMC system, Occ Health will contact you by day 5 to guide your return to work.

I tested positive and meet the requirements for returning to work. However, I live with someone who has also tested positive.

If you meet criteria to return to work and are cleared by Occ Health, you can return. The CDC recommends that if you are within 3 months of your positive test, recovered, and are now asymptomatic or your symptoms are improving you do not need to quarantine from the new positive contact. Please adhere meticulously to hand hygiene between home and work.

Before, if an employee tested positive, they needed two negative tests to return to work. Now they are saying that is no longer true. What changed?

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) continues to update its guidance and VUMC is following their recommendations to return health care employees to work. Data is showing that by day 10 after the initial positive test, even if someone continues to test positive, the result is reflective of viral fragments that are not capable of infecting others.

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Before, if an employee lived with someone who tested positive, the employee had to stay home from work for at least 14 days. Now vaccinated employees can be at work and unvaccinated employees with household exposures are being asked to test on day 7 of their quarantine if they are asymptomatic.

What changed?

The CDC updated the [When to Quarantine](#) guidelines shortening the quarantine period from 14 days to 7-10 days because studies demonstrate minimal chance of spread after day 7. Consequently, VUMC has now updated their guidelines to reflect that an unvaccinated workforce member who has an exposure to a confirmed COVID-19 positive household contact are able to return to work after quarantining for 7 days **IF** they have: developed no COVID-19 symptoms and the workforce member has a confirmed negative SARS-CoV-2 PCR test. Similarly, with vaccines now available, the CDC has [changed the guidance](#) to allow fully vaccinated healthcare workers who have high-risk exposures to remain at work as long as they are asymptomatic. They will also be tested at day 7 to confirm that they have remained negative.

Before, if an employee had a work exposure, they were able to remain at work. Now, unvaccinated employees who have an unprotected work exposure need to stay home and quarantine, with a test on day 7 of their quarantine if asymptomatic. What changed?

The new TOSHA Emergency Temporary COVID-19 Standard requires that unvaccinated workforce members (who have not had COVID-19 infection within the last 90 days) with an unprotected co-worker exposure (e.g. not wearing appropriate PPE for the encounter such as a surgical mask in clinical buildings or clinical areas of mixed-use buildings) stay home and quarantine. It allows for testing, with a negative test allowing return to work early from quarantine.

If I was exposed at work, can I get tested to shorten my quarantine period?

Asymptomatic testing for vaccinated employees after a workplace exposure is not required for work purposes. Only unvaccinated individuals who were notified by Occupational Health and had to stay home to quarantine require testing to return. In addition, per CDC guidance, fully vaccinated individuals do not need to quarantine after exposures.

I live with someone who has tested positive and have remained asymptomatic. Occupational Health has ordered a SARS-CoV-2 PCR test for me. What happens next?

For Unvaccinated Employees:

- **If the result is negative**, the employee is allowed to return to work with surgical/procedure masking at all times until Day 15 after exposure. Then, on Day 15, employees can continue to wear surgical/procedure masks (or convert to a fabric mask if in a fully non-clinical area) per current VUMC general masking guidance.

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For Fully Vaccinated Employees:

- **If the result is negative**, the employee is allowed to remain at work with surgical/procedure masking at all times until Day 15 after exposure.
 - A negative test at Day 7 does NOT rule out development of active COVID-19 infection. Employees should continue to mask and self-isolate as much as possible.
 - They must also not remove their mask (such as for eating/drinking) if around others until Day 15.
 - If symptoms develop after a negative test, leave work immediately and repeat testing.
 - Unvaccinated/partially vaccinated employees are not allowed to work in myelosuppression or transplant units/clinics until Day 15 after their last household exposure.
 - Return to work tests ordered by Occ Health will be billed to your insurance. If you feel that the exposure was related to work, please complete a VERITAS.

Where can I get more information?

Visit Occ Health's COVID-19 site to help answer these and other questions related to coronavirus: vumc.org/health-wellness/covid-19.

Occ Health's departmental website is another source of information: vumc.org/health-wellness/occupational-health