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Guidance

COVID-19: management of staff and exposed patients or residents in health and social care settings

Updated 22 July 2021

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This publication is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-management-of-exposed-healthcare-workers-and-patients-in-hospital-settings/covid-19-management-of-exposed-healthcare-workers-and-patients-in-hospital-settings>

1. Scope

This guidance is intended for staff and managers in health and social care settings and includes:

- guidance relating to health and social care staff if they develop coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, receive a positive test result or are identified as a contact of a COVID-19 case
- guidance on isolation requirements for patients and residents in health and social care settings after contact with COVID-19 cases
- guidance on repeat testing for COVID-19 for staff, patients and residents in health and social care settings

There is separate guidance on investigation and clinical management of possible cases (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-initial-investigation-of-possible-cases/investigation-and-initial-clinical-management-of-possible-cases-of-wuhan-novel-coronavirus-wn-cov-infection>) available.

Guidance for stepdown of infection control precautions and discharging COVID-19 patients and asymptomatic SARS-CoV-2 infected patients (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-stepdown-of-infection-control-precautions-within-hospitals-and-discharging-covid-19-patients-from-hospital-to-home-settings/guidance-for-stepdown-of-infection-control-precautions-and-discharging-covid-19-patients>) and Admission and care of residents in a care home during COVID-19 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-admission-and-care-of-people-in-care-homes/coronavirus-covid-19-admission-and-care-of-people-in-care-homes>) provide information specific to hospital and care home settings respectively, including isolation requirements following positive SARS-CoV-2 polymerase chain reaction (PCR) results.

This guidance was written by Public Health England (PHE) primarily for a health and care professional audience in England. Country specific advice may be available for each country across the United Kingdom. Please refer to Health Protection Scotland (<https://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/a-to-z-of-topics/covid-19/>), Public Health Wales (<https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/latest-information-on-novel-coronavirus-covid-19/>), or Public Health Agency in Northern Ireland (<https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/news/covid-19-what-situation-northern-ireland>).

2. Guidance for health and social care staff on COVID-19 symptoms, test results and being identified as a contact of a case

All staff who come into contact with COVID-19 cases – whether or not they are protected by the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) or by other factors – should remain vigilant to the possibility of contracting infection, and should follow the guidance in this document if they develop symptoms.

Staff who are contacted by NHS Test and Trace should not assume that this relates to exposures in their workplace and must follow instructions on isolation.

2.1 If a staff member develops COVID-19 symptoms

If a health or social care staff member develops any of the 3 main symptoms of COVID-19 (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/symptoms/>), however mild: