

# Return to work following exposure or COVID diagnosis

Updated 05 October 2023



Western Health

COVID - 19

Be Safe -- Be Smart -- Be Kind

## What is this QRG about?

This QRG provides guidance to managers, staff and students about the requirements to return to work after testing positive or being exposed to COVID. Staff and managers should read this guidance carefully and apply the appropriate recommendations to their situation. Provided the conditions are met, staff may return to work immediately and may not require any further approval or authorisation.

## Categories

Category	Requirements to return to work	Additional Precautions
<b>Social contacts</b> <b>Workplace contacts</b> <b>Education contacts</b> These are contacts that take place in a social context (outside of the home or similar residential address), at work or in education settings	<i>Can continue working and are required to:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Monitor for signs and symptoms:</b> Complete a RAT or PCR if new symptoms develop</li></ul>	Staff returning to work on site MUST: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Be asymptomatic</li><li>Wear an N95 mask at work for 7 days from exposure</li><li>Not share break areas with mask off for 7 days from exposure</li></ul>
<b>Close contacts (Household and Household-like contacts)</b> The staff member lives with another person who is COVID positive <b>or</b> The staff member has spent >4hours with a person diagnosed with COVID in a residential setting such as a home or staying in a hotel*  * Note contact for >4hrs in other settings such as restaurants, parks or other venues are considered 'social contacts'. Refer to above category	Staff are required to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Monitor for signs and symptoms:</b> Complete a RAT or PCR if new symptoms develop</li></ul>	Staff returning to work on site MUST: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Be asymptomatic</li><li>Wear an N95 mask at work for 7 days from exposure</li><li>Not share break areas with mask off for 7 days from exposure</li></ul>

Category	Requirements to return to work	Additional Precautions
<b>COVID positive staff</b>  <b>(includes staff who test positive on either PCR or Rapid Antigen Test*)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The government recommends an isolation period of at least 5 days from the date of the positive test. For example, if a test was taken on Monday (Day 0), isolation ends on Saturday if the person has NO symptoms.</li> <li>Western Health staff <b>cannot</b> return to work on site until symptoms have resolved.</li> <li>Staff can return to work on day 6 if they have <b>no symptoms</b> of COVID-19, without the need for a RAT.</li> <li>Staff can return to work earlier than day 6 if they have no symptoms of COVID-19 and RAT tested has converted from positive to negative.</li> <li>Staff with any persisting symptoms between day 7 and 14 can return to work if they feel well enough once they return a negative RAT.</li> </ul> <p>Staff who do not meet these criteria by day 14 should contact <a href="mailto:RACDR@wh.org.au">RACDR@wh.org.au</a> for advice</p>	<p>Staff returning to work on site MUST:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wear an N95 mask at work for 14 days from their first positive test</li> <li>Not share break areas with mask off for 14 days from first positive test</li> </ul>

Managers should also refer to the 'Managers return to work checklist for staff who identify as a close contact' located in [Appendix 1](#)

For instructions on staff taking a rapid antigen test <https://coronavirus.wh.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Information-For-Staff-Undertaking-Rapid-Antigen-Testing-V5.2-04.11.2022-1.pdf>

### Advice for WH staff when travelling to and from work

- Staff are **strongly** discouraged from travelling in a car with a COVID positive person. The following safety measures are **strongly** encouraged if this is required for the staff member to get to work:
  - All in the car should wear N95 masks
  - Ensure access to fresh air by having **at least** one window open >1 inch
  - Vehicle air conditioning should be set to fresh air to optimize ventilation

Staff should refer to the Victorian Government website for additional requirements outside of the workplace, including mask wearing requirements: <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/checklist-contacts#checklist-for-household-contacts>

**APPENDIX 1: Manager's checklist for staff who identify as a Close Contact**

COVID positive staff cannot attend the workplace.

Positive staff are required to notify their manager and complete WH's COVID-19 Positive Staff Member – Notification of Positive Result REDCap Survey:

<https://survey.wh.org.au/redcap/surveys/?s=AFAFPP473D>

Social Contact	Return to work under the following conditions	Next steps for Managers
<b>Social contacts</b> <b>Workplace contacts</b> <b>Education contacts</b>	The staff member: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Must be <b><u>asymptomatic</u></b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Must wear an N95 at all times (unless they are in their own office, alone, with the door closed)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Must not enter a shared indoor break area without wearing an N95 mask</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> At the slightest onset of symptoms, will advise their manager, leave the workplace and perform a RAT/PCR.</li> </ul>	Staff can automatically return to work as long as conditions are met.  No exemption required
Close Contact	Return to work under the following conditions	Next steps for Managers
<b>Household</b>  and  <b>Household-like contacts</b>	The staff member: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Must be <b><u>asymptomatic</u></b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Must wear an N95 at all times (unless they are in their own office, alone, with the door closed), for 7 days following their exposure</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Must not enter a shared indoor break area without wearing an N95 mask, for 7 days following their exposure</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> At the slightest onset of symptoms will advise their manager, leave the workplace and perform a RAT/PCR.</li> </ul>	Manager completes checklist with staff member and provides approval to attend work if all criteria met.  The staff member can continue working with manager's approval and does not have to wait for any further confirmation.