

Health Advisory: Quarantine for Vaccinated Health Care Workers

Minnesota Department of Health, Tue, Feb 16 10:00 CST 2021

Action Steps

Local and tribal health department: Please forward to hospitals, clinics, urgent care centers, emergency departments, and convenience clinics in your jurisdiction.

Hospitals, clinics and other facilities: Please forward to occupational health and employee health leadership, infection preventionists, infectious disease physicians, emergency department staff, hospitalists, primary care clinicians, and all other health care providers who might see patients with COVID-19.

Health care providers:

- Exclude all health care workers from health care settings for 14 days following COVID-19 exposures regardless of worker vaccination status.
- Advise fully vaccinated, non-symptomatic health care workers, who are within days 14-90 of completing the vaccine series, with COVID-19 exposures that they *may* return to community activities but should self-monitor for COVID-19 symptoms for 14 days.
- Test and isolate any individual who develops signs or symptoms of COVID-19 after a known exposure.

Background

Quarantine (separation from others) helps to prevent the spread of infectious disease that might occur before a person knows they have been infected. Because it can take up to 14 days for people to develop COVID-19 after an exposure to a positive person, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) have recommended that people stay out of work and out of the community for up to 14 days after a known exposure.

The COVID-19 vaccines currently being administered in the United States have demonstrated high efficacy at preventing severe and symptomatic COVID-19. However, there is currently limited information on how much the vaccines might reduce transmission of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, and how long the protective effects of the vaccine last. In addition, the efficacy of the vaccines against emerging SARS-CoV-2 variants is not known. At this time, vaccinated persons, including HCW, should continue to follow current guidance to protect themselves and others, including wearing a mask, staying at least 6 feet away from others, avoiding crowds, avoiding poorly ventilated spaces, covering coughs and sneezes, washing hands often, following CDC travel guidance, and following guidance related to personal protective equipment use or SARS-CoV-2 testing in the workplace.

CDC has released updated guidance regarding quarantine for individuals who are exposed to a person with COVID-19 after having received a full COVID-19 vaccine series. Although recommendations for activities in the community have changed for vaccinated individuals, CDC has included exceptions for HCW and other persons who are in contact with vulnerable populations.

Updated Recommendations for Quarantine of Vaccinated Health Care Workers

Exposure Definition: In the community and household settings, exposure to a person with COVID-19 occurs when there has been close prolonged contact (within six feet for at least 15 minutes cumulative within a 24 hour period). In health care settings, exposure occurs when there has been close prolonged contact, or close contact of any duration during an aerosol-generating procedure, with a person or their secretions or excretions, while the exposed individual is not wearing all appropriate personal protective equipment.

Vaccination Status: Exposed health care workers who are not 14 days past a completed a COVID-19 vaccine series or who are over 90 days past completing the series should follow recommendations for unvaccinated persons.

Community Activities Exclusion: Under updated CDC guidelines released on February 10, 2021, vaccinated persons, including HCW, who have experienced an exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 are not required to quarantine from community activities if they meet all of the following criteria:

- Are fully vaccinated (i.e., ≥ 2 weeks following receipt of the second dose in a 2-dose series, or ≥ 2 weeks following receipt of one dose of a single-dose vaccine)
- Are within 3 months following receipt of the last dose in the series
- Have remained asymptomatic since the current COVID-19 exposure

Persons who do not meet all three of the above criteria should continue to follow current MDH quarantine guidance after exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19.

Health Care Setting Exclusions: HCW should continue to implement a 14 day exclusion from all health care settings after COVID-19 exposure, regardless of vaccination status. This exception to the broader quarantine recommendations for vaccinated individuals has been made to ensure the safety of patients and congregate care residents as we learn more about the individual efficacy and population-level effectiveness of vaccination during this time of evolving risk.

As a component of the contingency staffing plan, if a health care organization has exhausted all other staffing options and is experiencing a staffing shortage, exposed HCW who remain without signs or symptoms of COVID-19, and are not positive for SARS-CoV-2, may be asked to return to work in the 14 days after exposure. Details are outlined in MDH: COVID-19 Recommendations for Health Care Workers (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/hcwrecs.pdf>). As an additional measure of caution, health care organizations might consider asking exposed individuals who

are vaccinated to return to work before those who are unvaccinated during the 14-day quarantine. HCW who have experienced a high-risk exposure are protected under Minn. Rule 144.4196, which provides worker protections to those asked by MDH to stay out of work because of exposure to, or infection with, an infectious disease. As such, these exposed HCW are in a position to choose whether to return to work during the recommended quarantine period.

Exposure Testing and Isolation: Any HCW or other individual who develops signs or symptoms of COVID-19 after a known exposure should isolate and be tested by RT-PCR for SARS-CoV-2.

For More Information

- CDC: Interim Clinical Considerations for Use of mRNA COVID-19 Vaccines Currently Authorized in the United States
- MDH: Quarantine Guidance for COVID-19 (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/quarguide.pdf>)
- MDH: COVID-19 Recommendations for Health Care Workers (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/hcwrecs.pdf>)
- MDH: Responding to and Monitoring COVID-19 Exposures in Health Care Settings (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/response.pdf>)
- [MDH: COVID-19 Testing](#)
- Call MDH at 651-201-5414 or 877-676-5414.

A copy of this HAN is available at: [MDH Health Alert Network](#)

The content of this message is intended for public health and health care personnel and response partners who have a need to know the information to perform their duties.