



# EMPLOYEE FAQ: COVID-19

February 19, 2021

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## Current CDC Guidelines on PPE: Case by Case

CDC recommendations are now for ALL patients, regardless of COVID status- therapists are to wear two masks (one surgical covered by a cloth mask), gloves and eyewear while in the facility/community or home at a minimum. Find guidelines here

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/effective-masks.html>

If your patient develops **ACTIVE** S&S – place on medical hold, as per normal protocol

If your patient was positive for COVID-19 and is now medically cleared AND/OR remains on isolation per facility policy – full PPE required/droplet precautions (mask, gloves, gown, face shield/eyewear)

If your patient was positive for COVID-19 and is now medically cleared AND/OR remains on isolation per facility policy – if facility DOES NOT HAVE PPE, patient is NOT to be treated by therapy due to Isolation Policy, NOT COVID-19

**If your state, county or facility has PPE guidelines over and above the CDC recommendations, they are required to provide that PPE – we should all be using contingency strategies to preserve PPE for those who need it.**

**Please update your RVP with these facility guidelines so they can communicate to the COVID-19**

## More Questions Regarding Influenza and COVID-19:

- **Can I differentiate between influenza and COVID-19 by following my temperature?** Fever is common in both illnesses so this is not overly helpful. However, COVID-19 fevers do tend to come at the exact same time as chills, muscle aches, and headaches.
- **Are nasal congestion, sneezing, and a stuffy nose common with COVID-19?** Nasal congestion, sneezing, and a stuffy nose are more often associated with the common cold. In addition, a wet cough where phlegm is involved is also more prevalent with a cold. On the other hand, a dry cough or especially a loss of smell or taste can be symptomatic of COVID-19.
- **What are the telltale indications of COVID-19?** Shortness of breath, continued fever, loss of smell or taste, and chills are more likely to point to a COVID-19 infection rather than influenza or the common cold.
- **Will getting this year's flu shot prevent COVID-19?** No.
- **Can a person get the flu and COVID-19 at the same time?** Most definitely. In fact, having one illness makes you more vulnerable to others. If you do get flu and COVID-19 at the same time, you will probably be in for a rough time.
- **How important is the flu shot this year?** It is more important than ever. Even if you do get sick with the flu, the vaccine will lessen the duration, severity, and your contagious period. In addition, whether you've had your flu shot or not will be one of the questions your physician will be asking when trying to make a diagnosis. In other words, getting the flu shot reduces your change of influenza and reduces the chances of getting into this conundrum: do I have the flu or COVID-19 or a common cold?



## General Questions

### 1. What should be included in a self-check?

Per the HPH guidelines, please take your temperature twice a day (issue is >100.0), assess for respiratory symptoms, consider your risk of recent exposure, assess for reduced sense of smell. If you are sick (fever/chills, fatigue, muscle/body aches, headaches, sore throat, congestion, nausea, diarrhea) or exhibit any of these symptoms, call your supervisor and please stay home.

### 2. What if my family or friends have been exposed? Who do I report this to and can I report to work?

Each case needs to be reviewed on a situational basis. More details will need to be provided to determine the level of risk and if quarantine is necessary. Please contact HR before reporting to work.

### 3. When can staff return to work after showing symptoms – with OR without positive testing?

Staff can return to work at least 1 days (24 hours) since resolution of fever (without fever reducing medication) AND improvement in respiratory symptoms AND **10 days** (for low risk) since onset of symptoms. *Someone from HPH corporate will be in contact with you before returning.* If staff was hospitalized or severely immunocompromised related to a COVID-19 illness, the isolation period is extended to 20 days since onset of symptoms.

### 4. If I recently traveled, do I have to stay home for 14 days?

As of today, CDC recommends you stay home as much as possible and avoid close contact, especially if you are at higher risk of severe illness. If you must travel, follow any state and local travel restrictions currently in place. It is possible that some state and local governments may put in place travel restrictions, mandated quarantines upon arrival. For more information and travel guidance, check with the state or local health department where you are, along your route, and at your planned destination. Just because there are no restrictions at the time you plan to leave does not mean there won't be restrictions in place when you arrive. Additionally, the customer/building may require a quarantine upon their return so *please consult with your RVP/RD/PM when requesting PTO to understand the impact of this on your proposed travel.* <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/travel-during-covid19.html>

## Care Questions

### 5. What if a patient that I treat has a positive (or suspected) COVID-19 test?

If the patient has **ACTIVE** symptoms (fever, cough, acute SOB, etc.) patient should be placed on medical hold just as with any normal course of care.



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If the patient no longer has active S&S and has been medically cleared, clinically indicated treatment can begin/resume.

**6. If I have 2 patients that are roommates, can we complete concurrent treatment following universal precautions?**

Yes, that should not be an issue but precautions MUST be followed.

**7. Are there specific recommendations that you are making for Speech treatment for dysphagia patients?**

YES, we released guidance today about PPE for droplet precautions being needed for patients that undergo ST treatments that may cause Aerosol Generating Procedures (AGP) see link to that document [here](#).

**8. PPE donning at SNF, can those minutes count as part of set up for MDS minutes?**

Yes, this can be recorded as set up in Section O of MDS

**9. Q: How do I bill for PT remotely when treating in a SNF?**

Since you are in the same location as the patient, you will be billing your usual CPT codes. There is no special modifier that is needed. Be sure to document that the visit occurred remotely and mention the platform that was used.

**10. So I hear that telehealth is now allowed! How do I bill for this?**

Therapists can now provide telehealth to Medicare and Managed care beneficiaries in all settings. We will soon be utilizing Telehealth Champions to provide telehealth. Our EMR's are now ready to bill for telehealth. Modifier 95 will be used to bill telehealth.

**11. Medicare waivers – when do they expire?**

CMS extended them until December 31, 2021

**12. What, if anything, can be shared with facility and staff regarding specific information about those that have either been exposed or tested positive for COVID-19?**

HIPAA still applies during public health emergencies. It is imperative that HealthPRO® Heritage staff are aware of our privacy and security responsibilities in the midst of this public health emergency. HIPAA requires patient authorization for disclosures of protected health information, with limited exceptions. **DO NOT** disclose any patient or therapist names without obtaining the approval of the Compliance Team.

If other law (e.g.: state law) authorizes HealthPRO® Heritage to notify such persons as necessary to prevent or control the spread of the disease or otherwise to carry out public health interventions or investigations, disclosure to persons at risk of contracting or spreading a disease or condition is an exception.



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### 13. Who do I contact if I need to report a concern?

If you have specific customer questions or procedures, please work with your Regional. For exposure, risk or other concerns please reach out to HR and the Clinical team immediately.

### 14. What do some of these terms I am hearing mean?

Isolation - Separates sick people with a contagious disease from people who are not sick. Isolation may be required after travel to high-risk areas or while awaiting test results.

Quarantine - Separates and restricts the movement of people who were exposed to a contagious disease to see if they become sick.

Direct Exposure - When you have contact with an infected (positive COVID-19) individual. They are directly in your breathing zone.

Indirect Exposure - When you do not directly interact with the positive individual but are exposed to someone who was.

### 15. What if I am asked to fill out a facility questionnaire?

We recommend that you complete the questionnaire if the following questions are asked:

1. Has the individual recently traveled out of the country, state or county (when, where)?
2. Has the individual been in contact with any confirmed or suspected (positive COVID-19) cases? If so, when?
3. Does the individual have any signs and symptoms of flu or cold?
4. Does the individual have a fever over 100.0 degrees?

If the survey contains other questions, please seek guidance before answering.

### 16. Where do I find more information about COVID-19?

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

## Benefits Questions

### 17. What happens if I need to be quarantined due to suspected risk?

You can use PTO (up to 16 hours in the negative) for the time off or go unpaid. This is borrowing PTO in advance of accruing it. Please discuss this decision with your Supervisor.

### 18. What type of leave or time off benefits will I qualify for?

To apply for Family Medical Leave (FMLA) please contact Cigna at 866.562.8421. Cigna will determine if you are eligible for FMLA or any state leave programs. FMLA time is unpaid and provides job protection during a serious medical condition or to care for a family member who has a serious medical condition (among other FMLA qualifying events). While on an approved FML, you can use



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your FMLA Bank, PTO (up to 16 hours in the negative) or Short-Term Disability to receive income. The FMLA Bank is defined as a sick bank and can only be used while on an approved Family Medical Leave.

## **Documentation Questions**

### **19. Where can I find detailed information about specific Documentation Scenarios?**

[Documentation Guidance for COVID-19 – Home Health](#)

[Documentation Guidance for COVID-19 – SNF-AL-IL](#)

[COVID-19 – Documentation FAQ](#)