

This guideline has been reviewed and adjusted to reflect Southern Health-Santé Sud protocols and policies.

MEMO

Date: April 26, 2021
To: Health Service Delivery Organizations
From: **Dr. Brent Roussin**
Chief Provincial Public Health Officer
Lanette Siragusa
Chief Nursing Officer, Shared Health
Re: COVID-19 – Health-Care Worker Screening Tool - **Updates**

With increased incidence of Variants of Concern (VOC), Public Health has updated guidance for screening of close contacts and has altered the requirement for self-isolation to include all members of the same household.

Occupational and Environmental Safety and Health (OESH) has reviewed these changes and is implementing the following changes to health-care worker screening, with appropriate consideration for use of personal protective equipment (PPE) by the health-care worker at the time of possible exposure.

Please note the following updates:

Updated Contact Management for All COVID-19 Cases

Public Health recommends enhanced identification of contacts for all positive COVID-19 cases, including both VOC and non-VOC strains.

This includes a lowered threshold for those contacts that will be required to isolate, including:

- All health-care workers living in the same household as a positive COVID-19 case are to be considered close contacts and will be required to isolate. Exceptions may be considered where circumstances eliminated contact during the infectious period. COVID Line screeners and site Occupational Health Nurses will determine this through questions asked during the screening process and/or with information provided by Public Health.
- The threshold time for significant exposure has been reduced to 10 minutes from the prior 15. If there is uncertainty related to the duration of exposure, the individual should be considered a close contact.
- **Unchanged** – Any health-care worker with potential direct contact with infectious body fluids or who has provided care to a positive COVID-19 case – without the use of appropriate PPE – should be considered a close contact. This includes being coughed or sneezed on; physical contact such as hugging, kissing, or handshaking; shared items such as drinks, eating utensils, or cigarettes/vapes; and/or close face to face interaction without

a mask. Screening questions seek information related to the PPE worn by the health care worker and the individual they were in contact with.

Management of Fully Immunized Health-care Workers

Fully immunized individuals (those who have received both doses of current authorized vaccines), who received their second dose more than 14 days prior to the contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 will not be required to isolate if the following criteria are met:

- They are asymptomatic; and
- They do not have a medical condition (e.g. immunocompromised) that could impact vaccine effectiveness.

These individuals should self-monitor twice daily for COVID-19 symptoms for a period of 14 days following the last date of exposure.

If symptoms develop, they should immediately isolate (including from other members of their household), seek COVID-19 testing, and contact local Infection Control Practitioner or designate for occupational health screening.

Management of COVID-19 Recovered (Previously Infected) Health-care Workers

Health-care workers who have been deemed recovered from a positive case of COVID-19 within the past three months are assumed to be immune.

If these individuals are identified to have been exposed to a positive COVID-19 case, they should self-monitor twice daily for COVID-19 symptoms for a period of 14 days following the last date of exposure.

If symptoms develop, they should immediately isolate (including from other members of their household), seek COVID-19 testing, and contact local Infection Control Practitioner or designate for occupational health screening.

Testing of Asymptomatic Close Contacts

- All identified close contacts of a positive COVID-19 case should seek testing both at the time they are notified of their exposure and again at 10 days.
- Testing is also recommended for anyone with COVID-19 symptoms.

Operationally Required Exceptions

Requests for exceptions to be granted for health-care workers who are operationally required, should continue to be escalated by management. These require confirmation and approval by local Infection Control Practitioner or designate.

**This document does not replace COVID-19 occupational health screening.
Health-care workers must continue to contact local Infection Control Practitioner or designate for screening prior to returning to work.**