

## RWJMS Employee Health COVID19 Frequently Asked Questions

*What role does Employee Health serve in this crisis?*

RWJMS Employee Health is primarily responsible for assuring that RWJMS employees are safe to work and to care for patients. We do not provide direct patient care for employees. If you have medical needs or concerns, please contact your primary care provider or if you are having a serious medical condition, call 9-1-1 or go to a local hospital.

### **CONTACTING US**

*What is the number for RWJMS Employee Health?*

Our number is **732-235-6559**

*I called an hour ago and haven't received a call back. Why are you so slow?*

As you might imagine, employee health was suddenly inundated with calls starting last week. We are working on increasing our workforce and our goal is to get back to employees as quickly as possible. If you feel your matter is urgent, please specify that in your message so you can be prioritized. In general, urgent matters are those that impact patient care.

*Can I just email you?*

While employee health does have an associated email address, this is not actively monitored. Emailing individual employees is not advised as this may result in a delay of reaching you. We are prioritizing phone calls over emails.

*It's the weekend and I need to speak to someone urgently, what should I do?*

We are available over the weekend for urgent calls that impact patient care over the weekend. A number will be available on the voicemail to call for these cases. All other calls, we please ask that you leave a message and we will get back to you on Monday.

### **COVID19 EXPOSURES AND HIGH RISK TRAVEL**

*I have been exposed to a confirmed COVID19 case. What should I do?*

Please contact RWJMS Employee Health **732-235-6559**. Currently guidelines will allow you to work with active symptom monitoring and while wearing a facemask but you must first be screened for ability to return to work.

*I was put on quarantine for high risk travel or have just returned. What should I do?*

If we were aware of your status, we have reached out to you to release you back to work. If you have not heard from us, please contact employee health so we can arrange for your release with active symptom monitoring and facemask as above.

*What is active symptom monitoring?*

Active symptom monitoring consists of checking your temperature and reporting possible symptoms [cough, dyspnea or sore throat] twice daily which should include prior to each shift.

You will be on active monitoring for 14 days from the time of your exposure or return from high risk travel.

*How do I report my results from active monitoring?*

Results will be through an online monitoring system. You will input your temperature and symptoms electronically. You must be granted access to this system through employee health

*I'm too busy to input my results – can I just let you know if I develop symptoms?*

Active monitoring is a strong recommendation from both the NJ DOH and CDC. If you do not input into the system, we will receive notification and you will be pulled from your duties.

*What if I develop symptoms while on active monitoring?*

If at work, please immediately leave your duties and inform your supervisor. If at home, do not report to work. Please input your symptoms into the active monitoring system and call employee health. Do not return to work until you have spoken to employee health.

*I can't find a surgical mask. What do I do?*

Please do not work if you cannot find a mask. Contact your supervisor and inform them that you will be unable to work if you cannot be supplied with a mask. Employee health does NOT have a supply of masks at this time.

*I don't have a thermometer. What do I do?*

We understand that thermometers are in short supply in the community. We require that you take your temperature while on active monitoring. If this is not possible please do not return to work. Speak with your supervisors regarding other possible options to have your temperature checked prior to patient contact.

## **COVID19 TESTING FOR EMPLOYEES**

*I want to be tested for COVID19 by employee health, what do I do?*

Before calling to inquire about COVID19 testing, please be aware that we are currently only testing symptomatic employees with patient contact. All employees with symptoms should report them to employee health and consideration for testing will be a part of this assessment.

*Why are you not testing asymptomatic employees?*

The incubation period for the novel coronavirus is up to 14 days. Negative testing does not mean you cannot at some point develop symptoms and/or shedding and become infectious. Negative testing while asymptomatic and on quarantine does not clear you for back to work without monitoring.

*I have symptoms but have been told I will not be tested. Why is that?*

We are currently prioritizing employees with patient contact who have either a convincing clinical presentation or symptoms with a high risk exposure. Each case is evaluated individually. In cases of mild symptoms, we may ask that you stay at home and monitor symptoms to see if

there is progression to a more clinically consistent syndrome that would necessitate testing. Prioritization is necessary at this time to conserve testing supplies.

*If I test negative for COVID19, that means I can't possibly have it right?*

Unfortunately, no. COVID19 testing does have some false negatives. In the correct clinical setting, we may advise approaching your situation as a presumed positive even if you have a negative result.

*If I test positive for COVID19, that means I'm immune right?*

Unfortunately, we cannot assume this is the case. We are not yet certain that having a COVID19 positive syndrome means that you are immune from becoming re-infected. Standard monitoring for symptoms and precautions are necessary when you are cleared to return to work.

*What is your testing procedure?*

If you are advised to receive testing, we will provide all necessary information to explain our testing process. Testing is currently being done curbside within your vehicle.

## **RETURN TO WORK FOR SYMPTOMATIC EMPLOYEES**

*I tested positive for COVID19. When can I return to work?*

This will be decided on a case by case basis. In general, we are advising that you return 7 days from the point of symptom **improvement** AND without fever in line with the NJ DOH guidelines. Clearance to return to work should come from employee health

*I tested negative for COVID19. When can I return to work?*

This will be decided on a case by case basis. In general, we would advise you return at least 7 days from symptom **onset** and 72 hours afebrile in line with CDC guidelines. Clearance to return to work should come from employee health

*I wasn't tested for COVID19 but had symptoms. When can I return to work?*

This will be decided on a case by case basis. In general, we would advise you return at least 7 days from symptom **onset** and 72 hours afebrile in line with CDC guidelines. However, if not tested due to very mild or inconsistent symptoms, this may change our recommendation. Clearance to return to work should come from employee health

*I am a supervisor and I have employees who have been advised to stay out of work but are essential for patient care. What should I do?*

Please do not advise employees to return based on your assessment alone. We want to keep the hospital staffed as much as you do. If your staffing is so limited that you have exhausted all your options, we will re-evaluate employees currently advised to stay home to see if they can be released back to work. However, the safety of patients and other staff is paramount.

## **FIT TESTING**

*I need to be FIT tested, what should I do?*

We have had two open FIT testing dates as of now and will be holding more. If you cannot wait for an open date and need to be FIT tested due to a need to provide patient care that will involve aerosolizing procedures [intubation, bronchoscopy, sputum induction, CPR] or will be working in an intensive care unit, please contact employee health

*I was fit tested on a mask that the hospital currently does not have in stock. What do I do?*

If you are performing the above procedures or working in an intensive care unit please contact us immediately to see if there are other options for FIT testing you. Please do not preform these high risk procedures without an appropriately fitted mask. If you will soon be in an intensive care unit or performing high risk procedures, please contact us on a non-urgent basis to create a plan. If you will not have these high risk exposures, the hospital is actively working towards stocking the different types of masks as able.

*I have a beard. Can I be FIT tested?*

Unfortunately, no. If you are unable to shave for religious or other personal reasons, you will need to be trained in using a powered air purifying respirator [PAPR] if you are performing aerosolized procedures or working in the intensive care unit.

*I failed my FIT test. What should I do?*

You may be able to be FIT tested on another mask. If unable to have a successful FIT test on the available masks, you would also need to be trained in using a PAPR if you are performing aerosolized procedures or working in the intensive care unit.

## **OTHER**

*I'm frustrated by the lack of alliance of policies between RWJUH and RWJMS. Why have there been periods of discrepancies?*

We are working hard to align our policies with RWJUH as much as possible. Changing policies needs to be done with careful consideration and there may be discrepancies at times. We apologize for the confusion this may cause. For Rutgers employed clinical staff, we ask that you adhere to the policies of RWJMS.

*How do I protect myself and my family?*

Both at home and at work,

- a. Practice frequent hand washing,
- b. Clean shared areas and “high-touch” items regularly (keyboards, doorknobs, common spaces, cellphones, etc.), and
- c. Maintain social distancing whenever possible (including limiting social gatherings, particularly with other health care workers).

When seeing patients,

- a. Minimize close contact and duration of contact with patients whenever possible. As community spread and prevalence of COVID-19 increase, so will atypical presentations. (e.g. take history >6 feet from the patient, considering calling the patient on the phone if

possible for the initial history or longer conversations, stand *behind* the patient for brief exams in event of coughing or sneezing into your face. In an urgent evaluation for a COVID-19 patient, complete as much of your assessment outside of the room as possible--you can collect vitals and determine if a patient is critically ill requiring MICU often by visual assessment.)

- b. Minimize the number of providers contacting a patient.
- c. Prioritize *both* the patient and provider wearing a facemask when seeing a suspected COVID patient. The risk of transmission decreases when the patient wears a mask properly. If the patient is wearing the mask incorrectly (not over nose and mouth) and is able to reposition the mask, ask the patient to do so *before* you enter the room.
- d. Be prepared to require use of an N-95 mask any day at work. Any stubble or facial hair can disrupt the integrity of the N-95 seal making it less effective in protecting the provider. Please prepare accordingly.