

FAQs on the COVID-19 Emergency Guidance for Caregivers Returning to Work

Q: What is the COVID-19 emergency guidance on caregivers returning to work?

A: On Dec. 23, 2021, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued guidance to [mitigate staffing shortages](#) at healthcare facilities. The guidance addresses concern about the increased transmissibility of the SARS-CoV-2 Omicron variant and the number of healthcare personnel who are expected to be out of work.

If a facility continues to experience staffing shortages despite implementing all other mitigation strategies, the CDC guidance permits healthcare personnel who have been infected with COVID-19 to return to work after five (5) days from the onset of symptoms.

These contingencies are in place to ensure appropriate levels of staffing for safe patient care and a safe work environment.

Q: How is Cleveland Clinic implementing this guidance?

A: Cleveland Clinic Ohio hospitals are under significant strain as we are caring for more patients with COVID-19, and have more caregivers out of work due to COVID-19, than at any point during the pandemic. This temporary guidance therefore applies to any of our locations identified by need as we navigate the emergency situation.

Currently, at our Ohio locations, caregivers who test positive for COVID-19 will be asked to return to work after **five (5) days** if they:

- are asymptomatic or have mild symptoms with no fever; and
- have already been vaccinated or had COVID-19 in the past six months.

Q: What is the return to work process for caregivers who work at a location affected by this emergency situation?

A: These caregivers will be notified through MyChart on day five (5) following symptom onset. The MyChart message will include a survey that asks questions about their symptoms.

As a result of completing the survey, a caregiver who is eligible to return to work will be expected to return for their next shift, and their manager will also receive an email indicating the caregiver is cleared to return. The manager should notify the caregiver of when to report for their shift.

Q: Do these caregivers need to get a COVID-19 test to return to work?

A: No, caregivers do not need to get tested and/or show a negative test result to return to work at locations that are implementing this temporary guidance.

Q: Is there disciplinary action for ignoring the MyChart survey or not returning to work?

A: We need everyone's help, teamwork and understanding to get through the most severe challenge we have faced during this pandemic. In order to be consistent with current return to work policy, corrective action may be applied to caregivers who do not complete the MyChart survey or report to their next shift as communicated by their managers.

Q: What safety protocols will these caregivers be following?

A: We remain committed to providing the safest possible environment for patients and caregivers. Caregivers returning will be assigned to work in designated areas and required to wear additional personal protective equipment, including a well-fitting ear loop procedure mask as source control or an N95 mask for COVID patient care.

In addition, we are reminding all caregivers to continue following safe behaviors: vaccination, handwashing, masking and physical distancing, which includes limited use of break rooms, cafeterias and other gathering places.

Q: What if a caregiver is not cleared to return to work?

A: Caregivers who are not eligible to return to work after 5 days from symptom onset will be contacted by Occupational Health.

Q: How is caregiver time away being addressed?

A: The required time away (RqTA) pay code may be applied for scheduled and missed shifts up to 5 consecutive calendar days following a positive COVID-19 test. Caregivers who remain symptomatic after 5 days will use PTO and/or other available leaves for additional absences. This applies to all Cleveland Clinic U.S. locations.

Q: What if I am exposed to someone who has COVID-19?

A: Caregivers who have been exposed to persons with COVID-19 but are asymptomatic will continue to work, regardless of vaccine status, and will be required to wear a well-fitting ear loop procedure mask as source control or an N95 mask for COVID patient care and continue to follow all safety protocols.

Q: Does this guidance apply to contractors working at Cleveland Clinic?

A: This guidance will also apply to contractors who are essential to our operations. Those contractors will receive further direction from their Cleveland Clinic representatives. Contractors may be asked to call the Caregiver COVID-19 Hotline to be cleared for returning to work.