

Protecting yourself, your colleagues, our patients and our Health Service

19 July 2022

Changes to testing requirements

- In line with the announcement by the Victorian Government in relation to the new BA.4 and BA.5 COVID variants, the close contact exemption period for COVID-19 has been shortened from 12 weeks to **four weeks**.
- The four-week period is:
 - when you are considered likely to be protected from subsequent COVID-19 infection and therefore are not deemed a close contact after an exposure, and
 - the period when you should not have asymptomatic testing performed



Testing

Employees

- Employees continue to use a RAT if you are a close contact
- Symptomatic employee – RAT or PCR
- Time for asymptomatic retesting and close contact definition (4 weeks)
- Priority Pathology Employee COVID PCR testing is available at Monash University Drive Through Clinic (show Monash Health ID)



What to do if you're a close contact

You are a close contact if you have spent more than four hours with someone who has COVID-19 inside a house, accommodation or care facility without appropriate PPE in place.

Healthcare workers who are close contacts and have **no symptoms can attend work provided you:**

- Notify your manager and complete the [Monash Health Close Contact Form](#)
- Undertake daily RAT testing for five days
- Wear an N95 while on-site and have breaks alone

Healthcare workers who are close contacts and **have symptoms may return to work if you meet the following criteria:**

- You have received a negative PCR test
- Your symptoms are improving
- You have not experienced a fever in the past 24 hours

You must:

- Notify your manager and complete the [Monash Health Close Contact Form](#)
- Undertake daily RAT testing for five days
- Wear an N95 while on-site and have breaks alone.

If your PCR test returns a negative result, but your symptoms are not improving or worsening, do not attend work.

Please take another PCR test.



What to do if you test positive for COVID-19

Your first priority is your health and wellbeing. COVID-19 can be a serious illness. If your symptoms are severe or worsen, contact your GP or call the Department of Health hotline on 1800 675 398.

- **Reporting a positive test result**

If you test positive for COVID-19, please let your manager know and complete our [online COVID-19 Positive Notification Form](#). If you received a positive result using a RAT, you also need to notify the Department of Health using their [COVID-19 Positive Rapid Antigen Test Self-Reporting Form](#).

- **Isolating at home**

If you are diagnosed with COVID-19 you must isolate to prevent the spread of infection. The day you received a positive result is Day 0. You can return to work on Day 7 if you are free of symptoms.

- **Support and guidance**

If you have been diagnosed with COVID-19 and have mild to moderate symptoms, there is helpful information available at: <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/im-a-covid-case-contact>

If you have concerns related to your own health, you can also contact the **Employee COVID-19 Hotline** on **8572 5610**, 7am to 6.30pm, seven days a week.



Pre-admission COVID screening

For our patients, the preadmission screening process for all elective surgery admissions continues to ensure we identify anyone who is symptomatic or a Primary Close Contact.

- **But** includes updated advice regarding COVID close contact exemption period
- Screening will still occur 48-72 hours prior to admission
- Patients undergoing a day case procedure will continue to be able to access PCR in the community as only required when *symptomatic*

What's changed?

- Preadmission swabs for overnight admissions will now be undertaken at point of admission
- Elective surgery patients are to be treated as non COVID if asymptomatic whilst awaiting the result of their PCR

When do we do the testing?

- Testing will be done on the day of admission, by a nurse at the point of admission (or wherever is sensible during the patient's admission process)



Winter COVID-19 vaccination dose

On 7 July 2022, [ATAGI expanded](#) the eligibility criteria for the winter dose.

Eligibility

- The winter dose is now available to adults aged 30 and above. It is recommended that adults aged 50 to 64 years receive a winter booster dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.
- You can receive the winter dose three months after your third dose or after being infected with COVID-19 (if the infection has occurred since your third dose).
- There is no indication at this time that the winter vaccination dose will be mandatory for Health Care Workers.



COVID vaccination service for employees

In response to the updates to the eligibility criteria we are opening on-site Pop-up vaccination clinics for Monash Health employees.

- Pfizer only
- Winter doses for employees only
- Walk in only (no prioritisation) – queue lengths may mean employees may have to return at a later time

Monash Medical Centre

- Commences **Tuesday 19 July** for 2 – 4 week period (pending demand)
- Mon – Fri ~ 0730 – 1600 hrs – ***last walk-ins accepted at 3:15pm, or earlier based on queue length***
- Seminar Room 2

Mobile Service

- Commences **Monday 18 July** for 2 – 4 week period (pending demand)

Moorabbin Hospital – Monday 18 July 2022, Main entrance (Bus), 0900 – 1600 hrs

Dandenong Hospital – Friday 22 July 2022, Location TBC, 0900 – 1600 hrs

Casey Hospital – Monday 25 July 2022, Location TBC, 0900 – 1600 hrs

Kingston Centre – Friday 29 July 2022, Location TBC, 0900 – 1600 hrs



Hospital Visitation

There are no changes to visitation at this time.

Visitors must wear a mask

- **In public areas** - All people 8 years and older must wear a surgical or N95 mask.
- **In patient care areas** - Adult (18+) visitors, caregivers and support people must wear an **N95 mask** and Children aged 8-17 years must wear a surgical or N95 mask.
- People who are unable to wear a mask will only be able to enter under exceptional circumstances e.g., at the end of life, for a patient with special needs, or where a carer is staying overnight with a patient.
- Unless specifically authorised by the treating team, visitors may not remove masks or other personal protective equipment while visiting COVID-19 positive patients.

Physical distancing is required

We ask that visitors maintain 1.5 meters distance from other people.

Visitors will not be able to enter if they:

- are unwell with any COVID-19, gastroenteritis or flu like symptoms e.g., running nose, fever, cough, sore throat, vomiting or diarrhoea.
- are awaiting a COVID-19 test result.
- have spent more than four hours with someone who has COVID-19 in the past seven days (unless wearing appropriate PPE).



Mask use

Mandatory in all areas of Monash Health including shared office spaces

- **In non-clinical areas**, the minimum requirement is a surgical mask
- **In clinical areas caring for non-COVID / non-SCOVID patients**, an N95 and standard precautions are required
- **In clinical areas caring for COVID and SCOVID patients**, N95 and eye protection, gloves and gowns are required
- Masks are not required when an employee is alone in an office.



Working Remotely

Remote working arrangements should be considered for administrative and non-patient facing roles, where it is safe and practical to do so.

The decision is at the discretion of your manager and requires a Working Remotely Agreement.

Food Sharing

Sharing food remains a transmission risk for COVID-19 and other infectious diseases. Please do not share food, including cakes, in the workplace.



Face-to-Face Meetings / Training

Face-to-face meetings and training should not take place except where clinically required.

- Consider alternative meeting options such as MS Teams, Webex and phone.
- Where face-to-face meetings need to occur, masks must be worn, and physical distancing (1.5m) should be observed where possible.



Leave

What if I am required to not attend work in accordance with Victoria's Chief Health Officer's advice?

If you are unable to work from home, you will be able to access paid special leave. For example, if you have been directed to self-isolate due to testing positive for COVID-19.

What if I am a close contact or exposed to COVID-19 within my household?

If you are eligible to return to work under the exemption for close contacts but you do not wish to, please speak to your manager about whether you are able to work from home.

If you are unable to work from home and are required to isolate, from 1 January 2022 you will have access to paid special leave for the 7 day quarantine period. If you are a close contact and do not develop COVID during this period, you can return to work.

If you develop COVID after being a close contact, you are eligible for another 7 day period of special paid leave. If you are still unwell after that 7 day period, you will need to access personal leave or other paid leave.



Leave

What leave am I entitled to if I get COVID-19?

If you test positive for COVID-19 on or after 1 January 2022 you will be entitled to special paid leave for the 7 days you are required to isolate. If you are still symptomatic following that 7-day period and you are unable to return to work, you will be expected to use your accrued personal leave or other leave entitlements.

If you are well enough to work from home, please speak to your manager about whether this can be accommodated.

If you are positive for COVID-19 you are not required to provide a medical certificate, but you should provide proof of your positive test result (either RAT or PCR), this may include evidence of your positive RAT being reported to the Department of Health.



Leave

What happens if I get COVID while on annual leave in Australia?

If you are on annual leave when you test positive for COVID-19 on or after 1 January 2022, you will be able to convert your annual leave to special paid leave for the 7 days you are required to isolate.

If you are still unwell following the 7 day isolation period, you will be able to access your accrued personal leave or other leave entitlements.

What happens if I get COVID when on annual leave overseas?

Special paid leave is not available for personal overseas travel or if you have returned from overseas travel and are required to quarantine in accordance with Federal and/or Victorian Government public health directions.

Where you are unwell while overseas you may be eligible for personal leave in accordance with your relevant Enterprise Agreement.

