

Dec. 9, 2021

Changes to staff screening due to Omicron variant: Q&As

Re: the statement: "Staff who have had household contact with a confirmed COVID-19 positive individual, regardless of the staff member's vaccinations status, must self-quarantine and cannot report to work":

Q: Does this mean if someone in your household is positive or if someone in your household has been in close contact with a positive person?

A: It means if someone in your household is positive. In that case, you can't report to work. You may be able to return once we know your COVID-19 positive household member does not have the Omicron variant and if there are critical staffing needs in your unit or department. Even where OHSW does permit you to return to work, daily antigen testing and workplace isolation would apply. The risk of COVID-19 transmission is highest among family members living in the same household due to the ongoing, close unprotected contact in a shared environment.

Q: Does this mean if your child has an exposure to a positive case at school and has to self-isolate, then the employee also must self-isolate even though they are secondary exposure?

A: No, it means if the staff member's child/household contact is the confirmed COVID-19 case, then the staff person can't come to work. We need to rule out the Omicron variant. Then we can consider return-to-work at some point if staff role is critical.

Q: Does the statement include contact with someone who attended your household gathering and then tests positive?

A: It depends on a number of factors including the degree of unprotected, close contact you had, whether they were at your house during their period of infectiousness, etc. You will need to speak with OHSW who will conduct a risk assessment to determine if you are able to safely be in the workplace.

Q: If you have someone coming home for the holidays who lives outside of Canada (e.g., USA) and is staying with you, then are you required to be on work isolation?

A: Yes, you would need to be on work isolation.

Q: If you are in the USA for less than 12 hours, then how do you respond to question #6?

A: You would pass question #6 and not be required to be on work isolation unless you answer yes to any of the other screening questions. You would badge in green.

Q: If you must self-quarantine due to a positive household contact, then will you be paid for the quarantine time or will Infectious Disease Emergency Leave (IDEL) pay apply?

A: Staff who must quarantine related to exposures at home/in the community are eligible for IDEL for up to 3 days per year; IDEL was recently extended to August 2022. Staff should speak with their manager if such a leave is required. Sick time is not applicable for staff who are required to self-quarantine due to COVID-19 positive cases in their household. Should the staff member end up acquiring COVID-19 from their household contact, sick time would apply.

Q: If the government requires me to be off work upon return from travel outside of Canada, requiring another PCR COVID-19 test, can I come to work on work isolation and performing daily rapid antigen testing if I've had a negative PCR test 48 hour prior to returning to Canada as required by KHSC?

A: No. KHSC staff screening requirements do not supersede any additional restrictions or requirements placed on staff by the government under the Federal Quarantine Act. For example, should the government require you to have another PCR swab upon arrival home to Canada, you would fail screening Question #4 since a federal quarantine would apply. Once you have that negative PCR test result, you could return to work on work isolation doing daily COVID-19 rapid antigen testing for 10 days after your return from travel.

Q: If I am on work isolation, can I still care for patients?

A: Work isolation still allows staff to perform patient care with the required PPE. But it means that staff **must not remove their mask when others are present**. Staff on work isolation cannot break in common spaces, even if distanced 6 feet from others. They are asked to break and eat/drink in individual office spaces or in a space that has specifically been set up for those on work isolation. These spaces allow for improved physical distancing and have disinfectant wipes for staff to use on eating surfaces/tables before and after use. Work isolation is an added precaution KHSC uses to ensure patients and staff are not exposed to a staff member who has a COVID-19 risk factor. Those on work isolation are not required to isolate outside of work unless they are instructed to do so by Public Health or OHSW. Workplace exposures to COVID-19 that are deemed to be high risk by OHSW will require a staff member to be on work isolation and to perform only essential activities outside the workplace (e.g., grocery shopping).

Q: Where can I get a rapid antigen test kit if I need to perform antigen testing for 10 days after my return to Canada from international travel?

A: You can obtain test kits from OHSW Monday through Friday 0700-1600, from the HDH main entrance screening station (until 8 p.m.) or from the KGH Kidd-Davies 1 main entrance screening station after hours. You can also get a kit through OHSW, 7 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday. If you have a positive rapid test, do not report to work and immediately contact OHSW.