![UAB EMPLOYEE HEALTH – The University of Alabama at Birmingham]

UAB Employees and COVID-19
FAQ – 1 September 2023

PURPOSE
This FAQ is intended to provide updated guidance to UAB employees who develop symptoms for COVID-19.

SCOPE
This policy applies to all UAB employees and staff

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I DEVELOP COVID-19 SYMPTOMS?
If an employee develops symptoms for COVID-19, they should cease work and patient care activities, don a facemask, and notify their supervisor prior to leaving work. *Symptoms associated with COVID-19 may include fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, muscle pain (myalgias), sore throat, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, headaches, congestion, runny nose, or new loss of sense of taste or smell.* Fever is either measured temperature 100.4°F or subjective fever (feeling like you have one).

WHERE CAN I BE TESTED?
Employees who develop signs or symptoms compatible with COVID-19 should pursue testing promptly. UAB Employee Health no longer provides free testing to employees, but testing is now widely available by contacting an employee's primary care physician office, or visiting a local urgent care or retail pharmacy. Employees may also call the UAB COVID-19 Call Center at (205) 975-1881 to make an appointment at [UAB Urgent Care](#) for testing. The CDC has a testing site locator available [here](#).

WHAT DO I DO IF I TEST POSITIVE FOR COVID-19?
Starting September 20, 2023, employees who test positive for COVID-19 should report it on the UAB Employee Health COVID and Flu online reporting form found [here](#). This updated form is intended to help UAB track COVID-19 and Flu cases, while also giving employees guidance on isolation and returning to work.

HOW DO I KNOW WHEN I CAN RETURN TO WORK?
After submitting a positive COVID-19 test via the online form, an automated email will be generated giving positive employees guidance on calculating a potential return-to-work date, and the employee may forward this email to their supervisor if needed.

The CDC also has a tool that is useful in calculating isolation time, located [here](#). In general, those with COVID-19 should isolate at home a minimum of 5 days (the first day of symptoms is day 0, and the last day of isolation is day 5). As an example, if an employee developed symptoms on Tuesday (day 0), the last day of their isolation would be Sunday (day 5) and they could return to work Monday. Those who are COVID-19 positive can end their isolation after day 5 if their symptoms are improved (no fever for 24 hours without taking fever reducing medicines, and only mild cough or congestion).

WHAT IF I AM IMMUNOCOMPROMISED?
Those who are immunocompromised (moderate or severely reduced immune system) with COVID-19 may stay contagious for a longer period of time, so a negative test is recommended before returning to work. UAB Employee Health currently recommends an isolation period of at least 10 days for those who are immunocompromised, and they should have a negative antigen or PCR test prior to returning.

WHAT IS CONSIDERED IMMUNOCOMPROMISED?
Those who have a moderate to severely reduced immune system can include:
- Those being actively treated for cancer
- Solid organ or bone marrow transplant patients
- Those with moderate or severe immunodeficiency (e.g., common variable immunodeficiency, severe combined immunodeficiency, DiGeroge syndrome)
- Advanced HIV infection
- Active treatment with high dose corticosteroids (i.e. 20mg or more of prednisone per day for 2 or more weeks)
- Active treatment with other immunosuppressive drugs.

For more information, please see the CDC website here. Please contact your primary care physician regarding whether you would be considered immunocompromised. For other questions regarding this, you can also contact UAB Employee Health at (205) 934-3675.

ARE THERE ANY RESTRICTIONS WHEN I RETURN TO WORK?
Employees who are returning to work after ending their isolation for COVID-19 should wear a face-mask for 10 days after the date of symptom onset (20 days for those who are immunocompromised).

FOR MANAGERS: DOES AN EMPLOYEE NEED TO BE CLEARED BY UAB EMPLOYEE HEALTH BEFORE RETURNING TO WORK?
Employees do not need specific clearance by UAB Employee Health prior to returning to work, if they submit their positive test to Employee Health and follow the isolation guidelines listed in the email, and their symptoms are improving. Immunocompromised employees may contact Employee Health for any questions regarding their return-to-work day, but should coordinate retesting with their primary care physician.

I WAS EXPOSED TO A PERSON OR PATIENT WITH COVID-19, OR A PERSON I LIVE WITH HAS COVID-19, WHAT SHOULD I DO?
Employees may continue to work as long as they are asymptomatic, but should wear a mask while at work. They should perform self-monitoring for up to 14 days after an exposure, which includes daily fever checks and monitoring themselves for COVID-19 symptoms. If symptoms develop, employees should cease working and be tested.

WHY DOES UAB EMPLOYEE HEALTH NO LONGER PROVIDE FREE TESTING?
When the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services ended the federal Public Health Emergency for COVID-19 on May 11, 2023, funding for free COVID-19 testing ended. COVID-19 tests, including home-test, are now widely available.

I HAVE A COUGH, CONGESTION, AND RESPIRATORY SYMPTOMS, BUT TESTED NEGATIVE FOR COVID-19, WHAT SHOULD I DO?
During flu season (October through March), employees should also consider testing for influenza. If employees are fever free, have only mild respiratory symptoms, and have tested negative for flu and COVID-19, they may work. It is recommended that they wear a mask until symptoms improve.

I STILL HAVE QUESTIONS, WHOM SHOULD I ASK?
If further guidance is needed for a COVID-19 exposure or positive test, please contact UAB Employee Health at (205) 934-3675 or by email at employeehealth@uabmc.edu.