

Recommendations for healthcare workers, having had unprotected close contact with COVID-19 cases

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Strict measures are in place to interrupt the transmission chains. Each canton established a procedure enabling it to ensure the isolation of persons newly diagnosed with COVID-19, as well as the identification and quarantine of their close contacts. Some specific considerations apply in the hospital setting; mainly for HCWs with specialized and highly demanded skills. Swissnoso recommendations complement the FOPH's recommendations for the management of cases and their contacts¹ and apply to all HCWs that had contact with COVID-19 cases irrespective of the place of contact.

A positive antibody assay does not change the recommendation below

Definitions

Contact HCW

A contact of a COVID-19 case is a healthcare worker (HCW) who currently has no symptoms and who has been in **close** contact with a *laboratory confirmed* or *probable* COVID-19 case, regardless of location:

- within 48 hours before the onset of symptoms, or
- for the duration of symptoms
- as long as the COVID-19 case is under isolation precaution measures in the hospital

A laboratory confirmed COVID-19 case has a positive PCR result. A probable COVID-19 case is a hospitalized or deceased person with a COVID-19 compatible X-ray (CT scan) or an epidemiological link to a confirmed case, a negative PCR and no other etiology.

Special situation:

If the person who tested positive did not show any symptoms (e.g. in the case of an outbreak investigation including also asymptomatic persons), the period to be taken into account for contact tracing starts 48 hours before sampling and continues until isolation of the newly detected COVID-19 has been in effect.

Close contact for HCW at workplace

- Contact within **1,5 meters** and for > 15 minutes (cumulative²) without protection (e.g. neither the HCW nor the COVID-19 case wore a mask and no physical barrier, e.g. plastic screen or face-shield)
- Care or medical examination or professional activity involving aerosol generating procedures without adequate personal protective equipment irrespective of the duration of exposure
- Direct contact with respiratory secretions or body fluids without adequate personal protective equipment

¹ www.bag.admin.ch/coronavirus-gesundheitsfachpersonen > Neues Coronavirus: Umgang mit Erkrankten und ihren Kontakten

² With repeated contact with the case during the period of contagiousness, the exposure times add up.

Measures after unprotected contact with a COVID-19 case

In principle, the same recommendations apply as issued by the FOPH for HCW with COVID-19 contact persons:

- Quarantine for 10 days after the last close contact and active self-monitoring for fever and symptoms of respiratory infections
- Contact with other people (except those who are also in quarantine in the same household) should be avoided
- When symptoms occur, HCW immediately isolate themselves, inform their employer and testing should be initiated.

Note, however, that in exceptional situations (e.g. relevant shortage of staff that puts patients' safety at risk or HCW with a specialized skillset for whom it is impossible to find a substitute), a special arrangement may be agreed after consultation with the competent cantonal authorities:

HCW can continue to work as long as asymptomatic and while

- i) Carrying a surgical mask in close contact with patients (<1,5m) and staff
and
- ii) Performing excellent hand hygiene