

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

(Version 5, Swissnoso 20. May 2021, **updated content in red**)

Strict measures continue to be place to interrupt Covid-19 transmission chains, in particular cantonal protocols for the isolation of persons newly diagnosed with COVID-19, as well as the identification and quarantine of their close contacts in the community.¹ Swissnoso recommendations complement the FOPH recommendations for the management of cases and their contacts in the acute care setting and apply to all healthcare workers (HCWs) that had contact with COVID-19 cases irrespective of the place of contact. **This updated version also includes recommendations on HCWs following full vaccination.**

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 (via PCR or RADT rapid antigen test → see Swissnoso decision aid on diagnostic methods for detecting Covid-19²). 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 (cumulative³) 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)

¹ FOPH guidance: BAG. Neues Coronavirus: Umgang mit Erkrankten und ihren Kontakten, <https://www.bag.admin.ch/bag/de/home/krankheiten/ausbrueche-epidemien-pandemien/aktuelle-ausbrueche-epidemien/novel-cov/information-fuer-die-aerzteschaft.html#481148239>

² https://www.swissnoso.ch/fileadmin/swissnoso/Dokumente/5_Forschung_und_Entwicklung/6_Aktuelle_Ereignisse/210520_Swissnoso_decision_aid__diagnostics_Covid-19_acute_care_V2_EN.pdf

³ With repeated contact with the case during the period of contagiousness, the exposure times add up.

- 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

Measures after unprotected contact with a COVID-19 case, according to vaccination status⁴

<p>HCW without full vaccination</p>	<p>HCW with full vaccination, Definition: > 2 weeks following 2nd dose of mRNA Vaccine, or > 2 weeks following one dose of mRNA Vaccine, if the HCW had a documented (PCR- or rapid antigen detection test, RADT confirmed) SARS-CoV-2 Infection</p>
<p>In principle, the same recommendations apply as issued by the FOPH for HCW with COVID-19 contact persons</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 <p>In exceptional situations (e.g. relevant shortage of staff that puts patients' safety at risk or HCWs with a specialized skillset for whom it is impossible to find a substitute), a special arrangement may be agreed after consultation with the responsible cantonal authorities (for the template of the letter, please contact Swissnoso secretariat: contact@swissnoso.ch), under which HCW can continue to work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • as long as asymptomatic and while • wearing a surgical mask <u>AND</u> • Performing excellent hand hygiene 	<p>Asymptomatic, fully vaccinated HCWs following exposure to a confirmed Covid-19 case</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May continue working under strict adherence to hygiene measures and • under active self-monitoring for fever and symptoms of respiratory infection for 10 days after the last close contact • When symptoms occur, HCWs immediately isolate themselves, inform their employer and testing should be initiated (regardless of vaccination status)

⁴ Similar to FOPH recommendations for fully vaccinated individuals in the community following close contact to a confirmed Covid-19 case: may be exempted from quarantine by the cantonal authorities <https://www.bag.admin.ch/bag/de/home/krankheiten/ausbrueche-epidemien-pandemien/aktuelle-ausbrueche-epidemien/novel-cov/information-fuer-die-aerzteschaft/faq-gesundheitsfachpersonen.html>