

Management of symptomatic staff

December 26, 2021 (V 1)

Symptomatic staff who were previously identified as close contacts of an active COVID-19 case should continue to follow previous work isolation guidance involving ID Now + Antigen testing (Version 2) circulated on December 26, 2021.

A. Standard protocol for most circumstances:

If a staff member or physician reports new COVID-19 compatible symptoms that are not explainable by other conditions e.g., symptoms of allergies that resolve with antihistamines:

1. Do not present to work—notify manager/department head/medical director and obtain ID Now test* as soon as possible;
2. If negative, to remain home until symptoms have resolved;
3. If positive, to remain home in isolation as per public health protocols.

B. Exceptional protocol for crucial symptomatic staff members with **negative ID Now tests:**

If the ID Now is **negative** and symptomatic staff member or physician is considered critical to operations, every effort must be made to backfill the staff/physician, including asking for redeployment assistance. If no backfill available:

1. They can return to work with symptoms in work isolation until symptoms have resolved;
2. The decision to allow this rests with the unit manager/department head/medical director;
3. The ill staff member/physician's crucial status needs to be reassessed daily with symptom checks and daily ID Now testing until 24 hours after symptom resolution. If an ID Now test becomes positive and the individual is still critical to operations, proceed to (C).

C. Exceptional protocol for crucial symptomatic staff members with **positive ID Now tests:**

If the ID Now is **positive** and symptomatic staff or physician member is considered critical to operations to a degree that patient harm would likely result if they could not work and they cannot be backfilled:

1. Immediately discuss with the appropriate director/department head/medical director who will escalate to the COO/CEO (for staff) or the CMO/CEO (for physicians) for final decision. Permission will only be granted in true critical situations and CPHO will be notified. Such decisions will be controversial and may cause considerable staff and public anxiety and need to be clearly justifiable.
2. If approved, staff member works in strict work isolation, avoiding contact with other staff. Specifically:
 - a. Wearing PPE at all times around others (visor, gloves, gown and wearing two medical masks). Note that a source patient wearing an N95 respirator is not recommended as the protective benefit is unknown.
 - b. Maintain at least 2m distancing at all times when possible;
 - c. Take breaks away from others while maintaining PPE;
 - d. Eat/drink away from others i.e., alone.
3. **The decision to allow ID Now **positive** symptomatic staff to work will be reassessed daily and every effort should be continued to attempt to back fill.**

*information on testing sites and hours is available at: <https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/health-and-wellness/covid-19-testing-in-pe>