



HASTINGS PRINCE EDWARD
Public Health

February 3, 2022

General Workplace Questions

Submitted as a follow up to Webinar entitled “COVID-19 In Conversation with Public Health” held on January 28, 2022

1. SELF ISOLATION REQUIREMENTS/SCENARIOS:

1. Scenario Question: [Scenario#1 from Webinar PowerPoint.](#) (a) What if Sally has taken a PCR and is negative the morning she calls in?

Answer: No, Sally has a symptomatic household member and therefore is required to [self-isolate](#) for the same duration as her household member, even if she tests negative. Her isolation is complete when her ill household member finishes their isolation. If the symptomatic individual (daughter) has a negative PCR test, then household members can discontinue self-isolation as long as they are symptom free.

[In Scenario # 1 from Webinar PowerPoint ...](#) (b) Would Sally's daughter's isolation period also extend?

Answer: No – Sally’s daughter can end self-isolation after five days **only** if her symptoms have improved for at least 24 hours, and all public health and safety measures, such as masking and physical distancing, are followed.

2. Scenario Question: [An employee had a close contact with someone positive for over 3 hours but does not live with the person. We chose to have employee stay off work as a result and that employee developed COVID-19. Had we followed guidance, employee would have been able to come back to work and self-monitor. Had this been the route we followed, this employee who became positive would have potentially spread the virus even further. Is this guidance really safe and enough for the person to simply have to monitor after known exposure regardless of vaccination status?](#)

The guidance sets out the minimum requirements only and does not take into account vaccination status of the exposed individual(s). If you feel your employees or workplace would be better protected by following more stringent practices, such as asking vaccinated employees to stay away from work for the 10-day self-monitoring period, then as an employer you can put those in place.

3. Scenario Question: Partially vaccinated family... Mom - the employee - is vaccinated. Her 3 year old daughter has two or more symptoms. For how long does mom have to isolate?

Answer: Mom must isolate for the same duration as her ill daughter. In this situation it is a 5 day isolation period for the entire household (children under the age of 12 years old isolate for 5 days as per the guidance on [ontario.ca/exposed](https://www.ontario.ca/exposed)).

4. Scenario Question: Family of 5 - 2 adults out of 3 - vaccinated. 1 adult and 2 children not vaccinated. If exposed or showing symptoms would the vaccinated have to isolate for 5 or 10 days?

Answer: All household members self-isolate for the same duration as the individual with symptoms, regardless of their vaccination status. If a fully vaccinated individual has symptoms, they need to self-isolate for 5 days and their entire household would do so for the same duration.

5. Scenario Question: What if in all of these scenarios, household members have symptoms but have taken a rapid test and have tested negative, does everyone still need to isolate?

Similar Scenario Question: An employee has two or more symptoms but tests negative for a rapid test...

Answer: A single rapid antigen test (RAT) cannot be relied upon to rule out COVID-19 in an individual. All household members must self-isolate for the same duration as the individual with symptoms.

If each symptomatic person has access to two RAT tests the below guidance applies.

If two consecutive RATs, separated by 24-48 hours, are both negative, the symptomatic individual is less likely to have COVID-19 infection, and they are advised to self-isolate until they have no fever and symptoms are improving for at least 24 hours (or 48 hours if gastrointestinal symptoms).

- The household members of the symptomatic individual with two negative tests may also discontinue self-isolation, as long as they are asymptomatic.
- If additional household members are symptomatic they must follow the guidance for [individuals with COVID-19 symptoms](#), including all household members self-isolating.

2. RAPID ANTIGEN TESTING:

1. Question: Rapid tests coming back negative after a positive? Is this because the levels are too low to read but the individual still is positive?

Answer: A positive RAT is highly indicative that the individual has COVID-19. The individual and their household members are required to self-isolate, as per self-isolation directions for individuals with COVID-19 symptoms and their household members.

An individual with confirmed COVID-19 on a molecular or rapid antigen test may resume asymptomatic screening testing after 30 days from their COVID-19 infection (based on the date of their symptom onset or specimen collection).

2. Question: If an employee takes a rapid test at home and it is negative - can we still ask them to come in and take our own test, to ensure it was their test?

Answer: Yes, if they pass screening to come to the workplace. If they are required to self-isolate due to symptoms or an exposure, then they can't leave their property.

3. Question: How many rapid tests should be taken and how far apart should they be spaced after a known exposure?

Answer: Exposed individuals should continue with the same testing frequency as the rapid antigen test (RAT) screening program the workplace has in place. If the individual develops symptoms, they should self-isolate immediately and take two RATs at least 24 hours apart (if available) to determine if their symptoms are likely related to COVID-19.

4. Question: If an employee continues to test positive after 5 days (assuming fully vaccinated) and their symptoms have improved, but they continue to test positive on a rapid test, is the direction to have them remain in isolation until they test negative?

Answer: No, test based clearance is not recommended after a positive test result. If an individual has completed the sufficient isolation period and is symptom free, they can return to work.

An individual with confirmed COVID-19 on a molecular or rapid antigen test may resume asymptomatic screening testing after 30 days from their COVID-19 infection (based on the date of their symptom onset or specimen collection).

5. Question: How do we deal with someone that has done their 5 days after positive test, they have improved symptoms but are still testing positive on rapid tests at home. Can they come back to work?

Similar Question: If the contagious period lasts 10 days after a person tests positive, how can they return to work and expose others after 5 days?

Answer: Yes, they can return to work but are required to take the follow precautions until 10 days after their positive test date:

- Continue to wear a well-fitted mask in all public settings;
- Not visit anyone who is immunocompromised or at higher risk of illness (e.g., seniors); and
- Not visit any highest risk settings.

An individual with confirmed COVID-19 on a molecular or rapid antigen test may resume asymptomatic screening testing after 30 days from their COVID-19 infection (based on the date of their symptom onset or specimen collection).

6. Question: Due to the possibility of contagion past the five-day period, our organization has extended the isolation time to at least 48 hours after symptoms have subsided.

The guidance sets out the minimum requirements only, if you feel your employees or workplace would be better protected by following more stringent practices, an employer can put their own policies in place.

7. Question: Is the day zero the onset of symptoms day or is that day 1?

The day the symptoms start is day 0, day 1 is the next full day.

8. Question: If the contagious period is 48 hours before and 10 days after, and we are to conduct a risk assessment on every contact they have at work, then why are they allowed back after 5 days if vaccinated? We thought the employer contact tracing was 2 days prior to symptom onset and 3 days after symptoms (Slide 17).

Individuals returning to work if their symptoms are 24 hours improving are required to follow precautions until 10 days after their positive test date or symptom onset:

- Continue to wear a well-fitted mask in all public settings;
- Maintain physical distancing;
- Not visit anyone who is immunocompromised or at higher risk of illness (e.g., seniors); and
- Not visit any highest risk settings.

3. WORKPLACE SCENARIOS:

1. Question: What are the responsibilities for businesses when it comes to contact tracing if a client at their recreation facility tells them they tested positive for COVID-19? I understand that Public Health units will not be doing contact tracing for many of the businesses that were just allowed to open up on Jan 31st.

(Similar Question): With gyms, recreation and sports facilities opening up on Jan 31st, my question is what are the responsibilities of a gym, dance studio or recreation facility if adult or youth participants in their programs get COVID-19?

Answer: Individuals are currently required to notify high-risk contacts on their own. Therefore, if a client notifies you they have COVID-19 because they were in your facility during their contagious period, you are expected to investigate whether high-risk exposures occurred in your workplace while the positive client attended. The process is essentially the same. You need to conduct the risk assessment using the same list of questions to the best of your ability (e.g., which area of the facility did this client attend, did they have prolonged close contact with any staff members or other clients (e.g., group training session)). You must then notify anyone deemed to be a high-risk contact of the client.

2. Question: Are people who have been double vaccinated, wearing masks at all times and being socially distanced in a dance class considered close contacts if one of them gets COVID-19 the day after they attended dance class?

Answer: No, they would be low-risk contacts in this situation.

4. WORKPLACE EMPLOYEE VACCINATION POLICIES:

1. Question: Are we allowed to ask employees if they are vaccinated?

Answer: Yes. The province has mandated vaccination policies in certain high-risk settings. Outside of these certain high-risk settings, workplace policies are strongly recommended as they can help keep workplaces as safe as possible – and benefit employees, employers, and the greater community.

Please refer to the [Ontario Human Rights Commission Policy statement on COVID-19 vaccine mandates and proof of vaccine certificates](#) for more information and context for development of a vaccination policy for your workplace. Also, to support the development of a Vaccination Policy for your workplace, please access. Please note, any personal health-related information of your workers must be kept confidential and becomes part of the individuals' personnel/HR file.

- [Workplace Vaccine Policy Guide](#)
- [Workplace Vaccine Policy Template](#)

5. REPORTING CASES AND OUTBREAKS TO WSIB/MINISTRY OF LABOUR:

1. Question: So, just to be clear, if an employee tests positive in the workplace, we need to report that to WSIB?

(Similar Question): I'm sorry, I don't think that I understand the answer given about reporting to WSIB. I thought in the slide about reporting, it said something about an employer needing to report positive cases to WSIB. If we have a positive case in the workplace, as an employer, do we need to report this to WSIB as the employee will be off work?

***Similar Question):** Who is expected to report cases to the Ministry of Labour and how do they do that?

Answer: All occupational illnesses/injuries are reportable to the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development, and to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. If a) the worker comes forward/states to the employer s/he/they has as an occupational illness (COVID-19) or b) the worker submits a WSIB claim independently (whether the claim is legitimate or not), the employer must report it to the MLTSD and to the WSIB. Please note, reporting does not constitute an agreement/admission that the illness is indeed occupational.

Notice of occupational illness: If an employer is advised by or on behalf of a worker that the worker has an occupational illness or that a claim in respect of an occupational illness has been filed with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board by or on behalf of the worker, the employer shall give notice in writing, within four days of being so advised, to a Director, to the committee or a health and safety

representative and to the trade union, if any, containing such information and particulars as are prescribed. Source: [Occupational Health and Safety Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. O.1, s. 52\(2\); 1997, c. 16, s. 2\(12\)](#)

Reports can be submitted to the MLTSD via phone at 1-877-202-0008 OR online: [Reporting workplace incidents and illnesses](#) | Ontario.ca

Reports can be submitted to the WSIB by calling 1-800-387-0750 OR online: [Report an injury or illness](#)

Please note, Individual operators are required to know if any other reporting requirements apply to them (i.e.: Farmers who hire International Agricultural Workers must also report workplace-acquired illnesses and injuries to Service Canada

6. WORKPLACE SCREENING TOOL:

1. Question: We have a screening tool done online daily by our employees. Since the changes Dec 30th there does not seem to be a PDF available to employers providing a written screening document for revision 5.5? The COVID-19 self assessment seems to be the only tool? We want to do an in-house system and wonder if there will be something available (*perhaps you could post the link to this in your response*).

Answer: The current provincial screening tools can be found [here](#), including one for employees. You can take the screening offline by clicking "[You can take the screening offline by downloading a PDF in English or French](#)" at the bottom of each of these pages.

7. FACE MASKS AND PHYSICAL BARRIERS:

1. Question: We have our reception desk surrounded in plastic sheets for the safety of our staff and clients. Is it required for the staff to leave a mask on when in that space. Answering phones when wearing a mask muffles the voice and will be a big issue for our client group. Thank you.

Answer: Employees may be exempted from mask use when they perform work for the business or organization if they are in an area that is not accessible to members of the public **and are able to maintain a physical distance of at least two metres from every other person while they are in the indoor area.**

8. SCIENTIFIC BASIS OF MASKS:

1. Question: What is the scientific basis for 2 metre or duration? I'm finding a lot of this guidance outdated and based on initial variants. Why are we still discussing surfaces for an airborne virus, that travels more than 2 metres, or disperses outdoors, etc.? Why do masks not counter that - otherwise is the logic that hospitals have to shut down, since virtually 100% have close contact daily?

Answer: Multiple layers of protection are needed to reduce transmission risks and protect the most vulnerable populations. The combination of protective layers, such as getting vaccinated, wearing a mask indoors, staying outdoors or in well ventilated spaces, practicing physical distancing and avoiding large gatherings helps to mitigate risk.

We suggest you review some of the content on [Science Table: COVID-19 Advisory for Ontario](#) which is used to inform the direction and guidance provided by the province of Ontario.

9. COLLECTION OF PATRON INFORMATION FOR CONTACT TRACING:

1. Question: [For performing arts centres, recreation and sports facilities, after school programs for children, March Break camps, it's not clear at all what our responsibilities are for contact tracing towards patrons, clients, self-employed independent contractors who may be in our facility for a short period of time to receive services.](#)

Answer: As of January 31, 2022, collection of client names and contact information is no longer required for contact tracing in most (non-high-risk) workplaces. Requirement for businesses to maintain contact records and produce them to Public Health on request are consequently lifted. *However*, there are two important considerations here:

- a) The first consideration is whether “other advice” has been issued by the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, or by a Medical Officer of Health after consultation with the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health. For example, the Ministry of Health issued [COVID-19 Safety Guidelines for Camps](#) on December 21, which still require certain contact records to be kept. Please scan Schedule 2 of O.Reg. 364/20 to see if other sector-specific guidance documents are adopted by reference into the regulation.
- b) The second important consideration is to remember that active screening of clients may be required for your business; please refer to Schedule 2 in [O.Reg. 364/20: Rules for Areas a Step 3 and at the Roadmap Exit Step](#) to determine if active screening applies to your specific industry sector (e.g., applies to restaurants, personal care services and others). Where active screening of customers is required, businesses may want to consider keeping a record of this, to prove they are complying with the active screening requirement. Note: Active screening of every person who works at the business or organization before they enter the premises of the business or organization is still required and this applies to all industry sectors.

10. PROOF OF VACCINATION/VACCINE PASSPORTS:

1. Question: [When will the vaccine passport/QR code require 3 doses of the vaccine to be “fully vaccinated”? Is that likely to happen in March or April when capacity limits are potentially](#)

lifted? Will children aged 5 to 11 be required to have 2 doses of the vaccine to enter recreation facilities this Spring or this Summer?

Answer: Please see the Ministry of Health’s updated the [Proof of Vaccination Guidance under the Reopening of Ontario \(A Flexible Response to COVID-19\) Act, 2022](#), which took effect January 31, 2022. This guidance document includes the provincial definition of a “fully vaccinated” individual, which remains in effect until the province revises that definition.

11. SECTOR-SPECIFIC QUESTIONS:

SERVICES REQUIRING THE REMOVAL OF FACE COVERINGS

1. Question: [Wondering if anyone has any information regarding services that require the removal of a mask. In personal care, we cannot perform any services that require a mask removal, but we have no indication when that is ending?](#)

Answer: Temporary removal of face masks/coverings is now permitted to receive services requiring the removal of a mask or face covering, for example, in a personal care service establishment. The person providing service to an unmasked customer must wear a face mask and suitable eye protection. Please refer to the general requirements in Schedule 1 and the industry-specific conditions outlined in Schedule 2, sec 8 of [O.Reg. 364/20: Rules for Areas a Step 3 and at the Roadmap Exit Step](#).

2. Question: [Do we know yet whether wine tours can resume Jan 31?](#)

Answer: Yes, businesses that operate Tour and Guide Services (including guided hunting trips, tastings and tours for wineries, breweries and distilleries, fishing charters, trail riding tours, walking tours and bicycle tours) may open if they comply with the general requirements in Schedule 1 and the industry-specific conditions outlined in Schedule 2, sec 29 of [O.Reg. 364/20: Rules for Areas a Step 3 and at the Roadmap Exit Step](#).

12. FINANCIAL RESOURCES AND SUPPORTS

Question: [If an employer offers 5 paid sick days, does this get used before the employer can claim through WSIB for COVID coverage?](#)

Answer: Please follow up with WSIB on the specific details of what they will cover.