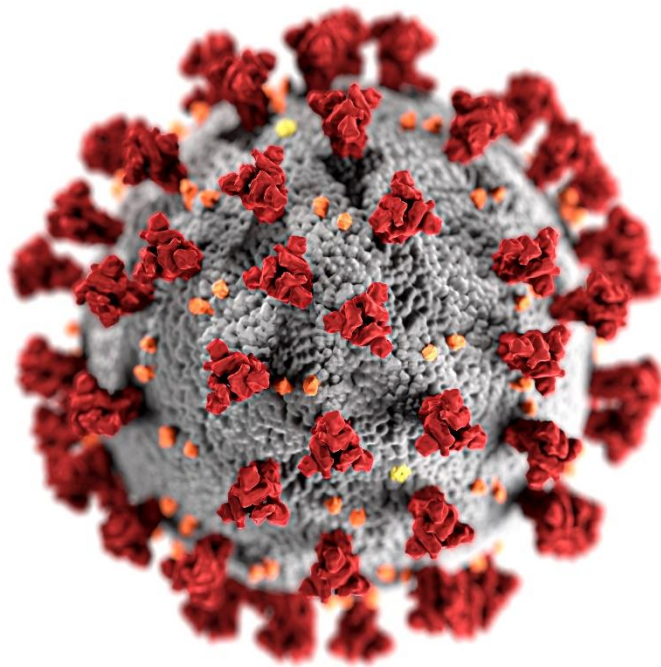




UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE



Exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace:

What you should and should not do

August 2020

Actions for a staff member testing positive

Any University or College staff member testing positive for COVID-19 on a swab (PCR) test should self-isolate at home for at least ten days, or until well for 48 hrs (whichever is longer).

They should also inform their line manager.

Actions for line managers

A line manager is not expected to conduct formal contact tracing. Contacts of the staff member testing positive should be called by the NHS test and trace service within 72 hours of the positive test result.

Nonetheless, to minimise the risk to other staff members, the University recommends that a line manager immediately:

- Identifies other University or College staff members who have been exposed to COVID-19 in the workplace as 'close contacts' of the staff member testing positive (see below)
- Asks them to work from home for 14 days, and
- Directs them to [this government website](#) containing advice for contacts of individuals testing positive for COVID-19.

Where working from home is not possible, staff members who have been exposed to COVID-19 should not return to the workplace for 14 days.

There is currently no NHS or University facility to offer COVID-19 swab (PCR) tests to staff members who have not been exposed to COVID-19, but this remains under review.

When NOT to take action

The above actions should only be considered in the event of a staff member testing positive on a COVID-19 swab (PCR) test, not on the basis of symptoms alone, or the suspicion of COVID-19.

When a staff member develops symptoms of possible COVID-19 infection and requests a swab (PCR) test, they are advised to self-isolate at home while awaiting the result. Close contacts of these staff members should not be quarantined during this period, only in the event of a positive test.

The above actions do not apply to 'contacts of contacts'.

These actions should not be considered in response to a positive antibody test result, which indicates previous exposure, not active infection.

Definitions of a close contact

A close contact is any individual who has been exposed to the staff member testing positive within the timeframe when they were likely to have been infectious.

For staff members testing positive with symptoms, this timeframe ranges from 48 hrs before the onset of symptoms to ten days after the onset of symptoms.

If the staff member testing positive had no symptoms (for example, if they were tested as part of an NHS screening programme) this timeframe is less well defined. In practice, we recommend a timeframe ranging from ten days before the positive test result to ten days after the positive test result, but this remains under review.

The following are considered to constitute exposure:

- Face-to-face contact of less than two metres distance for more than 15 minutes
- Physical contact
- Having unprotected direct contact with infectious secretions – for example, being coughed on.

A longer duration of contact is assumed to increase the risk of transmission. The 15 minutes guidance is selected arbitrarily for practical purposes in line with European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control and World Health Organisation recommendations.

Where staff members have shared a closed environment – for example, a meeting room – for very prolonged periods, even when distanced by more than two metres, the exposure may be considered significant on a case-by-case basis.

The use of face coverings by either the staff member testing positive, or their close contacts, is likely to reduce but not eliminate the risk of transmission, and the strength of this effect is not known in non-healthcare settings.

The use of face coverings should therefore not in general be used to determine whether or not a significant exposure has occurred, but may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Confidentiality

It is likely that the identity of the staff member testing positive may be inferred by other staff members in the workplace. Where practicable, the line manager should avoid specifically disclosing their identity to other staff members.

Cleaning

Routine/scheduled cleaning with appropriate cleaning materials for areas that have been occupied by an individual identified above should be maintained, with surfaces in communal areas being wiped down at the beginning and end of each day. No specific enhanced cleaning regime ('deep clean') is needed in addition to this. All staff and students are encouraged to continue with enhanced personal hygiene measures, including wiping down surfaces in communal areas before and after use (shared keyboards for example).

For additional information or queries please contact: safety@admin.cam.ac.uk