

Guide for Managing Viral Respiratory Infection or Exposure in Colleagues & Other Healthcare Personnel (HCP)

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Overview

Colleagues and other HCP experience exposure and/or infection caused by respiratory viral pathogens, e.g. influenza, SARS-CoV-2 (cause of COVID-19) and Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) during provision of care or in the community outside of work. This Guide incorporates updated recommendations from CDC's Healthcare Infection Control Practices Advisory Committee^{1,2} that address management of exposure or infection with any of these common pathogens. This guide also standardizes management for these three viral pathogens which is reinforced in a recent viewpoint,³

Exposure or Infection Management Guidance

Table 1. Exposure Management

Infections & Situation	Testing?	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> COVID-19, Influenza or RSV Unprotected exposure to a person with acute COVID-19, influenza or RSV 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not needed unless signs or symptoms develop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No work restrictions Colleague or HCP must wear well-fitting facemask, from the day of exposure (day 0) through 5th day after exposure for source control during work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue use source control through day 5. If no symptoms develop, can discontinue source control on day 6 and beyond Ask colleague to monitor for signs or symptoms of a viral respiratory infection for days 1-5 after exposure. If symptoms develop follow actions in Table 2, Infection Management, below

Table 2. Possible/Confirmed Infection Management

Infections & Situation	Testing & Treatment?	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> COVID-19, Influenza or RSV Suspected or lab confirmed infection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow recommendation from colleague's primary care provider 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restrict from work until* : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least 3 days have passed from day of onset of symptoms (or day of first positive test for a respiratory virus) and No fever for at least 24 hrs without use of fever-reducing medication Symptoms are improving and Feel well enough to return to work Wear source control (well-fitting facemask) upon return to work through day 7 after onset <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Day 0 = day of onset. Day 8 is first day after onset when source control can be discontinued Encourage use of hand hygiene and covering coughs/sneezes

***NOTE** Ministry IPC and EHS can consider additional temporary reassignment or extended work restriction (7 days or until resolution of symptoms) of colleagues with infection if their patient assignment is to care for patients in a Protective Environment (PE) such as hematopoietic stem cell transplant patients (HSCT).

Loyola Medicine: For high-risk protective environments units such as Oncology, Transplant, ICU: COLLEAGUES and VISITORS, please do not enter until at least 7 days have passed since onset of your illness, and you must be symptom free.

Comparative Summary of Key Aspects of Respiratory Viral Infections

Pathogen	Symptoms	Exposure Criteria	Additional Recommendations & Information
COVID-19	Gradual onset of fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, new loss of taste or smell, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache	Prolonged, unprotected close contact for >15 min over a 24hr period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage colleague to be up to date with vaccination as recommended by CDC³ Transmissibility: 2 d prior – 7d
Influenza	Abrupt onset of fever, chills, myalgia, headache, malaise, nonproductive cough, sore throat. Loss of taste and smell less common.	Unprotected, close contact through virus-laden droplets deposited onto the mucosal surfaces of the upper respiratory tract.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage seasonal vaccination if not already received⁴ Transmissibility: 1 d prior – between 5-7 days after onset
RSV	Mild cold-like symptoms like runny nose, sore throat, cough, headache, fatigue, and fever	Unprotected, close contact through coughs or sneezes, by direct contact with someone who has RSV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vaccine is available; follow CDC recommendations⁵ in discussion with primary care provider Transmissibility: 2 d before onset - 8 days

References:

- [Infection Control in Healthcare Personnel Workgroup Vote](#) Managing Respiratory viral infections, HICPAC, November 15, 2024.
- Infection Control in Healthcare Personnel Workgroup: respiratory viral infections evidence review. HICPAC November 14-15, 2024.
- Passaretti CL, et al. Respiratory equality: let's stop playing favorites with COVID-19 in the healthcare setting. Infect Control Hosp Epidemiol 2025;46:333-6.
- [ACIP Recommendations: COVID-19 Vaccine | ACIP Recommendations | CDC](#)
- [ACIP Recommendations: Influenza \(Flu\) Vaccine | ACIP Recommendations | CDC](#)
- [ACIP Recommendations: Respiratory Syncytial Virus \(RSV\) Vaccine Immunizations | ACIP Recommendations | CDC](#)