

Memo

To: All CVPH Employees and Providers

From: Vice President of Medical Affairs/Chief Medical Officer Lisa Mark, MD, Infection Prevention Team,
and CVPH Associate Chief Nursing Officer Carly Haag

Re: Return to Masking and Use of Protective Eyewear

Date: September 26, 2023

With the prevalence of COVID-19 in our organization on the rise, we are taking steps to protect our patients and our people. Effective immediately staff are required to wear surgical masks and when appropriate, eyewear. As of Wednesday, September 27, patients and visitors are also required to be masked.

This shift in policy is data driven and based on an increase in COVID admissions, hospital-acquired transmissions and the number of employees out of work.

Over the past 10 days, we've experienced a steady increase in the number of COVID-related ED visits and admissions. Today, there are approximately 50 employees out of work due to COVID – nearly equal to the number of employees out of work during the peak of the pandemic.

Return to Work Algorithm Change

Changes to the return to work algorithm for COVID positive employees have been made by Occupational Health and Wellness (OHW) to simplify the process while continuing to protect the health and wellbeing of our staff. Beginning Wednesday, September 27, COVID positive employees will no longer be required to report their symptoms daily to OHW or home test while they are out of work. A PCR test ordered by OHW or a PCC will remain a requirement and employees will be out of work for 7 days, calling OHW on day 7 for symptom review and if appropriate, a return to work release. The algorithm for employees exposed to COVID on the job has not changed. Exposure notification will be shared electronically and employees should be vigilant about checking email.

Protect Yourself, Your Family & Your Patients

By protecting ourselves and our families, especially during this chronic workforce shortage, we can continue to care for our communities. We know that masking at all times provides source control and reduces the likelihood of exposure in our day-to-day work. The addition of eyewear with direct patient care (or when others are not wearing a mask) protects exposure of mucous membranes as described by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Vaccines also play a large part in protecting our health and ensuring we can continue to deliver the care this community needs. We encourage everyone to attend the flu clinic on October 11 in the Auditoriums from 6 a.m. until 6 p.m. While at the clinic, you are encouraged to reserve a COVID booster/vaccination to be administered at a future date.

Staying home when you are ill and testing for COVID if you suspect it's the cause of your symptoms is another important way to contribute to our communities' health. As of Monday, September 25, the federal government is once again offering free antigen COVID tests – 4 for every member of your family – on the [COVIDtests.gov](https://www.covidtests.gov) website. Having these tests at home will help you make informed decisions about your health as we move into the Fall and Winter months.

We will continue to monitor and share COVID's impact on our organization. We know masking is an easy and effective way to protect our patients and staff during times of high community transmission. It's important that we remain nimble and responsive to changes in COVID that exist within our organization and community.

Feel free to reach out to us or OHW for additional information.