

**PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**  
**2020 – PAHAN – 488 – 03-17-ALT**



**Alert: Interim Guidance on Discontinuing Home Isolation/Quarantine and Returning to Work Criteria for Healthcare Providers with COVID-19**

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| <b>DATE:</b>           | 3/17/2020  |
| <b>TO:</b>             | Health Alert Network   |
| <b>FROM:</b>           | Rachel Levine, MD, Secretary of Health   |
| <b>SUBJECT:</b>        | <b>Interim Guidance on Discontinuing Home Isolation/Quarantine and Returning to Work Criteria for Healthcare Providers with COVID-19</b> |
| <b>DISTRIBUTION:</b>   | Statewide  |
| <b>LOCATION:</b>       | n/a  |
| <b>STREET ADDRESS:</b> | n/a  |
| <b>COUNTY:</b>         | n/a  |
| <b>MUNICIPALITY:</b>   | n/a  |
| <b>ZIP CODE:</b>       | n/a  |

This transmission is a “Health Alert”, conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

**HOSPITALS:** PLEASE SHARE WITH ALL MEDICAL, PEDIATRIC, NURSING AND LABORATORY STAFF IN YOUR HOSPITAL; **EMS COUNCILS:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE; **FQHCs:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE **LOCAL HEALTH JURISDICTIONS:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE; **PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE TO YOUR MEMBERSHIP; **LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES:** PLEASE SHARE WITH ALL MEDICAL, INFECTION CONTROL, AND NURSING STAFF IN YOUR FACILITY

The Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) is releasing the following updates based on guidance released by the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on March 16, 2020, for discontinuation of home isolation for persons with COVID-19.

- DOH is recommending that persons with COVID-19 under home isolation be released from isolation after a minimum of 7 days after symptom onset and after 72 hours of being afebrile and feeling well.
- Household contacts of persons with COVID-19 must be quarantined for 7 days after their last household exposure. For most, this will be 7 days after the person with COVID-19 is released from isolation.
- Healthcare providers diagnosed with COVID-19 must be isolated for a minimum of 7 days after symptom onset and after 72 hours of being afebrile and feeling well.
- Returning HCP must wear a facemask at all times and be restricted from caring for severely immunocompromised patients for 14 days after symptom onset, as well as adhere to strict hand and respiratory hygiene and monitor for symptoms.
- If you have a patient under isolation and would like to consult with DOH, please call your local health department or **1-877-PA-HEALTH (1-877-724-3258)**.

This guidance is based on available information about COVID-19 and subject to change as additional information becomes available.

These recommendations will prevent most but may not prevent all instances of secondary spread. The risk of transmission after recovery, is likely very substantially less than that during illness.

For Persons with COVID-19 Under Home Isolation:

Persons with COVID-19 who have symptoms and were directed to care for themselves at home may discontinue home isolation under the following conditions:

1. At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since recovery defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications AND improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); and,
2. At least 7 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.

For example, if day 0 is the onset of illness, persons with COVID-19 that are well on day 3 and afebrile and feeling well for 72 hours must remain isolated until day 7. Someone with COVID-19 who is still symptomatic on day 7, and has symptoms until day 10, cannot be released until day 13.

Household contacts of persons with COVID-19 must be quarantined for 7 days after the person with COVID-19 has been released from isolation. This means the household contacts will need to remain at home longer than the initial case.

For example, if the person with COVID-19 is afebrile and feeling well starting on day 7, the person with COVID-19 can be released from isolation on day 10, and the household contacts can be released from quarantine on day 17.

For Healthcare Providers (HCP) Diagnosed with COVID-19:

HCP MUST be excluded from work until:

1. At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since recovery defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications AND improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); and,
2. At least 7 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.

After returning to work, HCP should:

- Wear a facemask at all times while in the healthcare facility until all symptoms are completely resolved or until 14 days after illness onset, whichever is longer.
- Be restricted from contact with severely immunocompromised patients (e.g., transplant, hematology-oncology) until 14 days after illness onset.
- Adhere to hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene, and cough etiquette in CDC's interim infection control guidance (e.g., cover nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing, dispose of tissues in waste receptacles).
- Self-monitor for symptoms, and seek re-evaluation from occupational health if respiratory symptoms recur or worsen.

If you have a patient under isolation and would like to consult with DOH, please call **1-877-PA-HEALTH (1-877-724-3258)**.

Categories of Health Alert messages:

**Health Alert:** conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

**Health Advisory:** provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

**Health Update:** provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

This information is current as of March 17, 2020 but may be modified in the future. We will continue to post updated information regarding the most common questions about this subject.