



# Ascension

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**Subject:** Testing of Ascension Wisconsin Associates Who Have Been Exposed to COVID-19 and Remain Asymptomatic

With continued high levels of community spread of the SARS\_CoV-2 virus, Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) issued [Health Alert #18](#), which provided additional direction for Health Systems to support quarantine and isolation requirements related to Health Care Personnel (HCP).

The intent of this Health Alert is to ensure that “people with COVID-19 stay home and out of close contact with others.” Ascension Wisconsin has been well aligned with the guidance and will continue to require associates who test positive for SARS-CoV-2 are to remain off work for the defined period quarantine described by DHS.

For essential associates following a COVID-19 exposure, there has been the option during crisis staffing for them to return to work with self-monitoring during their quarantine period. Health Alert 18 has clarified those situations when this can occur and the steps that must be taken for exposed associates to be able to return to work.

**This workflow will be implemented on November 2, 2020.**

Based on Health Alert 18:

If 14-day quarantine of HCP will adversely impact patient care, healthcare facilities should ensure the following protections are in place before allowing exposed HCP to return to work:

- HCP should be asymptomatic.
- HCP should report temperature and absence of symptoms before each shift.
- HCP should wear a facemask at all times for source control while in the facility. A higher level of personal protective equipment should be used when indicated.
- HCP, to the extent possible, should minimize contact with other persons outside of work and continue quarantining when at home.

In addition to the above, HCP must complete baseline COVID-19 testing and participate in serial testing

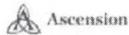
if they are to be eligible to return to work under a crisis staffing model.

If the exposure is work related, Associate Health will facilitate this testing. If the exposure is within the community, it is the associate's responsibility to schedule their testing and provide the results to their leader. The chart below outlines this process.

**Date of implementation of this process will be November 2, 2020.**

If you have questions regarding information, please contact your leader, Associate Health, or your Incident Commander who can elevate concerns as needed.

To view a larger version of the workflow below, [click here](#).



**Ascension Wisconsin Associate COVID-19 Testing for Self-Referrals as of November 2, 2020**

<p>Do you have any of the following symptoms?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fever (greater than 99.5)</li> <li>NEW or CHANGING Cough</li> <li>Shortness of Breath</li> <li>NEW Diarrhea (3 loose stools within 24 hours)</li> <li>NEW loss of taste or smell</li> </ul> <p>NO ↓</p>	<p>YES →</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If an employee feels they need medical attention, call their Primary Care Provider (PCP) to schedule an appointment (including virtual visit if appropriate). If you do not have PCP, consider seeking urgent care.</li> <li>Employee calls AscensionConnect to schedule COVID testing and answer questions at 1-833-982-0510. They stay home until testing is back. While awaiting results, use PANDEMIC FURLOUGH paycode if work exposure, PTO if social or no exposure. PTO if declines test</li> <li>Associate must inform their leader</li> <li>Symptomatic persons may be tested without a waiting period. If the initial test is negative and symptoms persist, re-testing should be considered especially if the initial test was early in the course of illness due to false negative rate.</li> </ul>
<p>If you have had a prolonged exposure to COVID (for more than 15 minutes total within 6 feet without appropriate PPE) or exposed during aerosol-generating procedure or living in the home with a family member with COVID:</p> <p>NO ↓</p> <p>If there is no prolonged exposure, an associate may still self refer for testing through Ascension Connect (see bottom box) Serial testing is NOT necessary</p>	<p>YES →</p> <p>Tell your leader. If you can work remotely, do so for 14 days. If not, you can return to work ONLY if:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>you have a baseline COVID-19 test that is negative AND</li> <li>You complete daily temperature and symptom monitoring with the app AND</li> <li>Face mask is worn at all times while working AND</li> <li>Minimize contact with persons outside work and continue quarantining when at home AND</li> <li>Complete serial testing approx. every 72 hours for 14 days.</li> </ol> <p>If unable to complete the above requirements, then the associate must remain off work for the 14 days of quarantine.</p>	<p><u>Test Positive or declines testing</u> ↓</p> <p>Testing site give pt results, offers tele visit with AMG to discuss further</p> <p><u>Associate contacts Associate Health</u> to determine if work-related</p> <p>Home until symptoms improved, fever free x24 hrs and 10 days since symptoms began</p> <p>Use PTO if declines test. If positive from Social update code to PTO/STD. If work-related Sedgwick will update to WC</p>
<p>Associate Requested Testing if there is an exposure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Associates must request testing if they wish to be considered for Return to Work (RTW) following an exposure.</li> <li>Associates who wish to RTW prior to completion of the 14 day WI State quarantine must provide the results of the baseline and serial testing to their manager.</li> <li>If an associate tests positive at any time during the baseline or serial testing, they are immediately excluded from work.</li> <li>If an associate develops symptoms at any time during the serial testing period, they are immediately excluded from work and referred for testing.</li> <li>IF Negative COVID tests and no symptoms during 14 days of serial testing - Release from monitoring and cease serial testing if no new exposures.</li> </ul> <p>Associates may obtain the required baseline and serial testing through Ascension Connect, their PCP or another testing center. If the exposure is work related, Associate Health will assist in facilitation of the testing.</p>	<p>Associate Requested Testing if there is NOT an exposure:</p> <p>Employees can call Ascension Connect to schedule COVID testing at 1-833-982-0510 for any reason.</p>	<p>→ Positive Covid test but never had symptoms Refer to Associate Health to assess if work exposure. Stay home for 10 days since date of test. If an employee feels they need medical attention call their Primary Care Provider (PCP) to schedule an appointment or a virtual visit. (not required)</p> <p><u>Pay Codes</u> Social/no exposure: PTO if social or no exposure use PTO/STD Work-related exposure: Sedgwick will update to WC</p>
<p>Associate Requested Testing if there is NOT an exposure:</p> <p>Employees can call Ascension Connect to schedule COVID testing at 1-833-982-0510 for any reason.</p>	<p>Employees can call Ascension Connect to schedule COVID testing at 1-833-982-0510 for any reason.</p>	<p>If no exposure and a negative test, the Associate may return to work following usual practices related to universal masking, daily screening and other established safe practices.</p>

## **FAQs:**

### **What happens if the associate's test comes back positive?**

If an associate tests positive at any time during the baseline or serial testing, they are immediately excluded from work.

### **What happens if the associate develops symptoms during the 14 days of serial testing?**

If an associate develops symptoms at any time during the serial testing period, they are immediately excluded from work and referred for testing with timing of testing based on the clinical decision of the ordering clinician.

### **What happens at the conclusion of the 14 days of serial testing?**

If negative COVID tests and no symptoms during 14 days of serial testing - release from monitoring and cease serial testing if no new exposures.

### **Can an associate still be tested for COVID-19 when they do not meet the definition of a prolonged exposure?**

Yes. An associate may self refer for testing at any time through Ascension Connect. They may also contact their Primary Care Provider directly for additional recommendations. If an associate does not meet the definition of a prolonged exposure, they do not need to participate in serial testing.

### **What is the definition of a prolonged exposure?**

Based on Health Alert 18: "COVID-19 exposure is deemed to occur if HCP have prolonged close contact (i.e., within 6 feet for a total of 15 minutes or exposure of any duration during aerosol-generating procedures) with a patient, visitor, or co-worker while not wearing appropriate PPE."

### **What is the serial testing process if the associate is living in close contact with an individual who tested positive for COVID-19?**

The date of exposure is initially established as the date of the known exposure. The exposed associate will begin baseline and serial testing immediately. Once the ongoing exposure ends (this would generally be 10 days after the COVID-19 positive individual is afebrile, but could be as long as 20 days if severe illness or immunocompromised) then the date of exposure is reset to that date and the 14 days of serial testing begins. (The 14-day quarantine period only begins after the exposure ends). The 14-day quarantine for exposure begins at the time the exposure is no longer occurring. In situations where an associate is living in close contact with an individual who tested positive for COVID-19, that exposure does not end until the positive individual is deemed no longer contagious. This is why the duration is longer than the typical 14 days.

### **Who will pay for the serial testing?**

If the exposure is work-related, this will be coordinated through Associate Health. If the exposure is community related, it will be the responsibility of the associate.

### **Is there a required lab that an exposed associate must use for testing?**

No. Associates may obtain the required baseline and serial testing through their established Primary Care Provider, an Ascension Wisconsin COVID testing location (contact AscensionConnect at (833) 982-0510), or another testing center that is most convenient for them. Serial testing can be performed with either molecular (e.g., RT-PCR) or antigen tests. If antigen testing is used, molecular tests are

required to confirm the results of a positive antigen test. If the exposure is work related, Associate Health will assist in facilitation of the testing.

**Is there a required turnaround time for the lab test?**

Yes. The associate must utilize a testing lab that is able to provide a turnaround time of less than 48 hours. If the test results are delayed beyond 48 hours, the associate will be excluded from work until the test result is returned.

**How do we know whether our site is facing a crisis staffing shortage?**

As a health system, Ascension Wisconsin will notify the Local Health Departments through DHS when we are facing a crisis staffing shortage. With the current high patient volumes, all AW sites are currently facing crisis staffing shortage. The notification occurs through the AW Incident Command structure and is reviewed every 30 days. If there is a question whether your site is facing a crisis staffing shortage, please reach out to your Incident Command leader.

**Who is considered Health care personnel (HCP) that are included in the crisis staffing shortage?**

Based on the definitions in Health Alert 18: "health care personnel (HCP) are defined following CDC criteria as any persons involved in direct patient care (e.g., nurses, nursing assistants, technicians, physicians, phlebotomists), as well as those not directly involved in patient care but who could be exposed (e.g., environmental services). HCP are considered to include personnel working in hospitals, outpatient medical clinics, long-term care and assisted living residential facilities."

**Can an associate work remotely instead of undergoing serial testing?**

At the time of an exposure, an associate is responsible for notifying their leader. The leader and associate can then have a conversation about whether remote work for the duration of the quarantine is an option. If remote work is not an option and the associate declines testing, then the associate is not allowed to work for the duration of the quarantine. If the asymptomatic associate can work remotely, then serial testing is not required; it is only required when working on site.

**Who does an associate call for testing if they choose to use Ascension Connect?**

Associates can call AscensionConnect to schedule COVID testing at 1-833-982-0510 for any reason. If the associate is established with an AMG provider, they are encouraged to contact them directly. An associate may also contact a non-Ascension testing facility if they choose as well.

**How will an exposed associate complete the self-monitoring?**

This can be completed through the associate app, or the process the associate uses as part of their daily screening process.

**If an associate is participating in the serial testing, do they still need to quarantine outside of work?**

Yes. The intent of Health Alert 18 is to mitigate risk of transmission of the virus and balancing that with mitigation of the healthcare personnel staffing shortages. Therefore the asymptomatic exposed associate is expected to follow DHS quarantine procedures outside of the workplace.

**Does an associate who has previously recovered from COVID-19 and has an exposure still need to undergo serial testing?**

If an associate has previously tested positive for COVID-19 AND has fully recovered (including completion of the required self-isolation period as defined by the severity of their illness), they would not need to repeat the serial testing if the date of exposure is less than 90 days from the date of

original positive test AND they have remained asymptomatic. *Note that this recommendation is subject to change at any time based on current understanding of the disease and immunity.*

**Who will keep track of an exposed associate's serial testing?**

If the exposure is work related, Associate Health will assist with scheduling and logging the associate's testing and results. If the exposure is a community exposure, then the associate is accountable for providing those test results to their leader. The leader is then accountable for keeping track of the test results and ensuring that they are completed in a timely manner. If they are not, it is the leaders responsibility to follow up with the associate. Failure to follow the serial testing expectations will result in the associate being excluded from work until the quarantine period is completed.

**How can the results be communicated by the associate to their leader?**

An associate can provide a copy of the paper results, or they may forward an electronic result communication to their leader. They may also provide a screenshot of the results that are sent electronically. If the results are provided verbally, it is expected that a written verification of the results be provided within 24 hours by the associate to their leader.

**What should an associate do if their serial testing lands on a weekend when there is no access to a testing facility?**

The intent of the serial testing is to have the testing completed every 72 hours; it is acceptable if the testing is in less than 72 hours. If an associate is to have testing on a Saturday and there is no testing site availability, then the associate should arrange for testing on Friday. If an associate is to have testing on Sunday and there is no availability on Saturday, then Friday testing would be preferred. Alternatively, the associate could be tested on Monday. However, the associate may not be able to return to work until the negative test result is available.

**Is there any latitude in the 72 hours?**

The intent of the alert is to have serial testing every 72 hours. The testing is to occur within the time period of every 3 days. Therefore, if the test is a few hours delayed it is still accepted. However, it should not be delayed beyond the third day. If there are concerns with scheduling the test within 72 hours, then it should be scheduled earlier rather than later. If a test is beyond the 72 hours the associate may not be able to return to work until the negative test result is available.

**What are the documentation expectations of a leader related to an associate who is participating in serial testing?**

The leader must keep a log for each associate that includes the date they were notified of the exposure, the date of the exposure, date/results at baseline and the date/results of each serial test every 72 hours for 14 days from the date of exposure. The leader must be able to produce this documentation for each associate who has had an exposure and is returning to work during the 14 day quarantine period. If at any time the associate develops symptoms or a positive test, this must be documented with confirmation that the associate was then excluded from work. The leader will retain the log in the associate's file indefinitely (or aligned with HR policy).

Sample log below -- [click here to view](#):

Associate Name:			
Associate ID:			
Site:			
Date of exposure notification			
Date of exposure			
Dates of 14 day quarantine period (14 days after the date of exposure)			
Date Associate completed serial testing			
If positive test, Date associate excluded from RTW			
Collection	Date/Time	Result	Symptoms? (Y/N)
Baseline testing			
serial test 1 (within 72 hours of prior*)			
serial test 2 (within 72 hours of prior*)			
serial test 3 (within 72 hours of prior*)			
serial test 4 (within 72 hours of prior*)			
serial test 5 (within 72 hours of prior*)			
*number of serial tests is dependent on the timing of the exposure and baseline testing. Serial testing to continue until the 14 day quarantine is completed			