

COVID-19 Associates with Possible Respiratory Illnesses or Symptoms Protocol

Updated: March 30, 2020

Bon Secours Mercy Health is supporting caregivers who safely continue work to serve our communities in this time of need. We will continue to do thermometer screenings for associates in high-risk areas prior to the beginning of the shift, as well as asking all associates to continue self-monitor for symptoms prior to beginning shifts and throughout shifts.

We are updating the associate protocol to provide additional clarity to our associates for when to come to work and when to stay home. Many associates are taking extraordinary steps to continue work, like finding alternative childcare arrangements, working long hours, and rearranging daily life during the COVID-19 outbreak to serve our patients and communities. Thank you for persevering in our time of need.

What are we doing to protect associates?

- 1) **Temperature scanning.** All respiratory therapists, and other health care workers working in high-risk settings such as the emergency department, ICU or cohort units and flu clinics, long-term care and assisted living facilities, will be required (at a minimum) to follow the temperature scanning process when they report to their work location, prior to beginning their shift.

If you are running a fever (greater than or equal to 100F), you will be asked to go home and not report to work for the next day. Refer to the [Symptomatic Associate SOP workflow](#) for additional information.

- 2) **Self-monitoring of symptoms**

An associate who has symptoms should contact Associate Health at 1-877-692-7780 and select option 8. Associate Health will give the associate a recommendation of whether work is advised:

- Fever equal to or greater than 100 or
- Cough or
- Shortness of breath
- [Click here for additional information](#)

- 3) **What to do if I have symptoms?**

An associate should not self-diagnose and call off from work due to either symptoms or high-risk factors. Associates who are experiencing symptoms should follow the guidelines below:

- **Associates with symptoms.** An associate who has symptoms should contact Associate Health at 1-877-692-7780 and select option 8, between the hours of 5 a.m. and 11 p.m. EST. Associate Health will give the associate a recommendation of whether work is advised. If you have **mild symptoms**, such as a sore throat or minor cough due to allergies (please remember it is allergy and flu season), you may be cleared to come to work.
- If you have **severe symptoms**, such as a high fever, Associate Health may ask you to not come to work and may refer you to a virtual visit with a provider, if appropriate.
 - Follow your regular call-off procedures (for example, contact your manager or staffing office to advise that you are symptomatic and that you will not be reporting to work).

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- If Associate Health recommends not working, you will not receive an attendance occurrence for not reporting to work if you have the above symptoms. This will reduce the spread of possible illness. Managers, if concerned about patterns of absence, may address it with you.

How do I return to work?

- 4) If the decision is made for you to stay home due to symptoms, you will call Associate Health at 1-877-692-7780 and select option 8 between the hours of 5 a.m. and 11 p.m. EST for a follow-up symptom review. Call when you have been fever-free for 3 days, without the use of fever reducing medications, and there have been improvements in any respiratory symptoms such as cough or shortness of breath.
 - [Follow guidelines for taking care of yourself while you are sick.](#)
 - [Follow these CDC guidelines for what do when you are sick to help protect yourself and your family members.](#)
- If you are still symptomatic 4 days later and can't work, apply for a medical leave of absence by calling Associate Services at 877-692-7780 and listen for the options to reach Integrated Absence for information on applying for short-term disability benefits to fast-track income replacement.
- You will not need to furnish a return to work note from your provider for respiratory illness during the COVID-19 outbreak.

High-risk factors. Associates who meet more than one of the following criteria may be considered at higher risk of complications due to COVID-19:

- Over 60 years of age
- With serious chronic medical conditions like heart disease, diabetes, or lung disease
- Pregnancy is *not* one of the current CDC high-risk factors

Associates with higher-risk factors (but no symptoms) may continue to serve our patients and communities. Associates are not required to report high-risk factors and are not required to request time-off.

High-risk factors without symptoms. An associate who is concerned about higher-risk factors and how it may impact their work may discuss with their manager any concerns (without disclosing personal medical information). The associate should also reach out to their healthcare provider to answer any questions they may have.

What if I have been traveling to high-risk areas?

5) Traveling associates

- International business-related travel is not permitted.
- Domestic business-related travel is only for essential business needs that must be completed in person and will require Market Leadership and/or ELC approval. Upon returning to your residence, complete the [BSMH Travel Questionnaire](#). Associate Health will advise when you are able to return to work.

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Reassignment or redeployment

- If you are unable to work for any reason, we may ask you to work in another capacity within the ministry. Some of those roles may be in an alternate location.
- Redeployment will be based on ministry need and available alternatives. Alternate work may not be available.

How will I be paid if I am out of work?

- 6) Associates that are out of work due to a community-acquired respiratory illness will follow applicable policies for absence from work due to a personal illness. This includes use of PTO.
- 7) Associates with a work-related COVID-19 exposure during the quarantine period (for up to 14 days)
 - Your Administrative Leave of Absence is paid at 100% of your regular wages.
 - We encourage you to work from home if possible (depending on your role).
- 8) Pay for associates who test positive for COVID-19 due to a work-related exposure:
 - You will be eligible for workers compensation.
 - You will use PTO and sick bank(s), if applicable, during your workers compensation elimination period, as required by state law.
 - If you are denied workers compensation, you will use remaining PTO and sick bank(s), if applicable, and go on Short-Term Disability (if applicable).
 - BSMH will provide Supplemental Pay to restore accrued PTO or sick banks used during any replacement period.
 - Supplemental Pay will also be provided to restore up to 100% of your salary under both Workers Comp. This pay assists you when you need it and delivers on our Mission of delivering compassionate care.

* Providers and those on who are eligible for ATO will be handled under a separate policy and with different terms.

** The Associate Care Management team is an additional resource who can provide confidential assistance and education to associates and family members who are at risk for complications due to COVID-19, especially for those over 60 years of age and have a chronic condition, such as heart disease, diabetes, or lung disease. If feel you would benefit from this service, contact Associate Care Management via email at assoccaremgmt@mercy.com. More information can be found on the [CDC website](#).