Anne Arundel County Department of Health
Respiratory Virus Guidance for Employees

This document serves to provide a unified approach to common respiratory illnesses. The updated guidelines will align Anne Arundel County Department of Health (AACDOH) guidelines regarding COVID-19 with the recently updated Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines to COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses. This guidance will replace all past policies and procedures related to COVID-19 for Department of Health employees.

Symptoms of Respiratory Infections include but are not limited to:

- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Difficulty breathing
- New loss of taste or smell
- Fever of 100.4°F
- Chills or shaking chills

- Muscle or body aches
- Sore throat
- Headache
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Fatigue
- Congestion or runny nose

DEFINITIONS

Fever. Has a fever (has a measured temperature of 100.4 °F [38 °C] or greater, or feels warm to the touch.

Fever-reducing medications. In the case of a high fever or a fever that causes discomfort, your healthcare provider may recommend nonprescription medication, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol, others) or ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin IB, others). Use these medications according to the label instructions or as recommended by your healthcare provider.

"Improving Symptoms" or "Symptoms are getting better". For the purpose of this document this means that a person is starting to feel better, and the body is returning to normal after an infection. A respiratory virus infection can have many types of symptoms, some of which can last beyond when someone is infectious, such as a lingering cough. So having a single symptom or a combination of symptoms is not as important as the overall sense of feeling better and the ability to resume activities. Fever is mentioned as a specific symptom in the guidance because people tend to be more infectious when they have a fever.

Physical distancing. Putting a physical distance between yourself and others. This can help lower the risk of spreading a respiratory virus. There is no single number that defines a "safe" distance since the spread of viruses can depend on many factors.

Treatment. An antiviral medication prescribed by a healthcare provider that lessens symptoms and shortens the time you are sick. It also may reduce the risk of complications and for those with risk factors for severe illness, early treatment can mean having milder illness. Treatment is most effective within the first 5 days of symptoms.

Up-to-Date on Vaccinations. Ensure you are optimally protected against respiratory viruses by getting vaccinated and staying up to date with the latest CDC recommendations based on your age. This includes the Influenza (flu) vaccine, the COVID-19 vaccine, and for those over 60

years of age, the Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) vaccine. The most recent CDC recommendations can be found at: https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/index.html

Well-fitting mask. A mask that fits snugly against the face. Masks should not have any gaps which can let air with respiratory droplets leak in and out around the edges of the mask. Masks should have multiple layers to decrease respiratory droplet transmission.

General Prevention Recommendations to Prevent the Spread of Respiratory Viruses
- Get vaccinated and stay up-to-date on vaccinations that are recommended for you. Vaccines are safe and effective.
- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for 20 seconds or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.
- Practice proper respiratory etiquette, including coughing and sneezing into the back of your elbow or into a tissue. Immediately throw away the tissue and wash your hands.
- Clean frequently touched surfaces regularly.

When you think you may have a respiratory illness
- Contact your immediate supervisor and stay home from work
- If you are at work and you become ill, immediately put on a mask, separate yourself away from others and go home if appropriate.
- Communicate with your supervisor the status of symptoms.

What to do as a supervisor if one of your staff develops a respiratory illness
- Encourage your staff to stay at home, if they are not feeling well.
- Follow Department policy regarding sick leave and telework.

You can go back to work and your normal activities when for at least 24 hours
- You have not had a fever and are not using fever-reducing medications
  AND
- Your symptoms are improving overall.
- Note that depending on the length of symptoms, this period could be shorter, the same, or longer than the previous guidance for COVID-19.
- If your symptoms worsen, such as increased shortness of breath, chest pain or fevers lasting more than 3 days, follow up with your provider or go to your nearest urgent care or emergency room.

When you return to work and your normal activities after being sick you should take additional precautions
- If you work in a clinical setting - You <u>must</u> wear a well-fitting mask for the next 5 days.
- If you do not work in a clinical setting - Masking is encouraged.
- Practice physical distancing.
- Practice proper respiratory etiquette and hand washing.
- Clean your work area if you share a space with someone else.

If you never had symptoms but tested positive for a respiratory virus
- You can continue to work and do your normal activities.
- If you work in a clinical setting - You <u>must</u> wear a well-fitting mask for the next 5 days.
- If you do not work in a clinical setting - Masking is encouraged.
- Practice physical distancing.
- Practice proper respiratory etiquette and hand washing.

- Clean your work area if you share a space with someone else.

When to test
- Rapid at-home COVID-19 tests can be used when respiratory symptoms develop to rule out COVID-19 infection only. Testing can determine your COVID-19 treatment options.
- Testing for COVID-19, RSV and Influenza is also available through pharmacies and other medical providers throughout the community.
- If you have risk factors for severe illness and serious hospitalization, it is recommended that you seek health care right away for testing and/or treatment.
- Rapid test kits are available at all Department of Health Health Centers as well as county libraries. Employees can call 410-222-7256 for further information or visit www.aahealth.org.
- If the COVID-19 rapid test is positive:
  - Continue to separate yourself from others.
  - Practice physical distancing and wear a high-quality mask when around others.
  - Visit your doctor or go to an urgent care center as soon as possible, especially if you are at a higher risk for severe disease. Treatment is most effective within the first 5 days of symptoms.
- If the COVID-19 rapid test is negative, but you still have symptoms:
  - Stay home and away from others.
  - Wear a high-quality mask when around others.
  - Follow the return to work guidance above.

What has been removed from this updated CDC guidance
- The Department of Health is no longer soliciting any contacts who may be exposed to any respiratory illness.
- It is no longer recommended to stay home and isolate for 5 days after testing positive for COVID-19.
- There are no longer recommendations for individuals who may have been exposed to a respiratory virus.

Additional Information:

CDC Resources
- CDC's Respiratory Virus Guidance
- CDC's Handwashing Guide- Clean Hands Save Lives
- Hand Sanitizer Use Out and About
- Stay Up to Date with COVID-19 Vaccines
- Frequently Asked Questions about COVID-19 Vaccination
- Influenza (Flu)
- Respiratory Syncytial Virus Infection (RSV)
- COVID-19 in Anne Arundel County
- Influenza and Flu - Anne Arundel County Department of Health