

COVID-19 Bulletin

 Southcoast Health

Exclusively for the employees
of Southcoast Health

03/19/2021

Greetings, Southcoast Colleagues.

In this Bulletin, you will find the following:

- *Continuation of pre-procedure COVID-19 testing even for fully vaccinated patients*
- *An update to the Return to Work (RTW) algorithm for asymptomatic staff who have been exposed but fully vaccinated*
- *The Commonwealth's announcements regarding Phase IV reopening and travel*
- *Guidance on in-person meetings and shared breaks for fully vaccinated staff*
- *An update on Southcoast's vaccination program*
- *An important reminder to remain vigilant*

Please scroll through the entire Bulletin to find these important updates.

And be sure to visit Southcoast's [COVID-19 Employee Hub](#).

Thank you.

UPDATE: Continuation of pre-procedure COVID-19 testing

We have received questions about whether Southcoast will continue testing patients for COVID-19 before they undergo a procedure at a Southcoast facility.

Please note that we are not making any changes to our current protocol, and pre-procedure COVID-19 testing should continue for all patients, even those who are fully vaccinated. The evidence has not yet firmly established that a vaccinated person would not transmit the virus if that person were to acquire an asymptomatic infection.

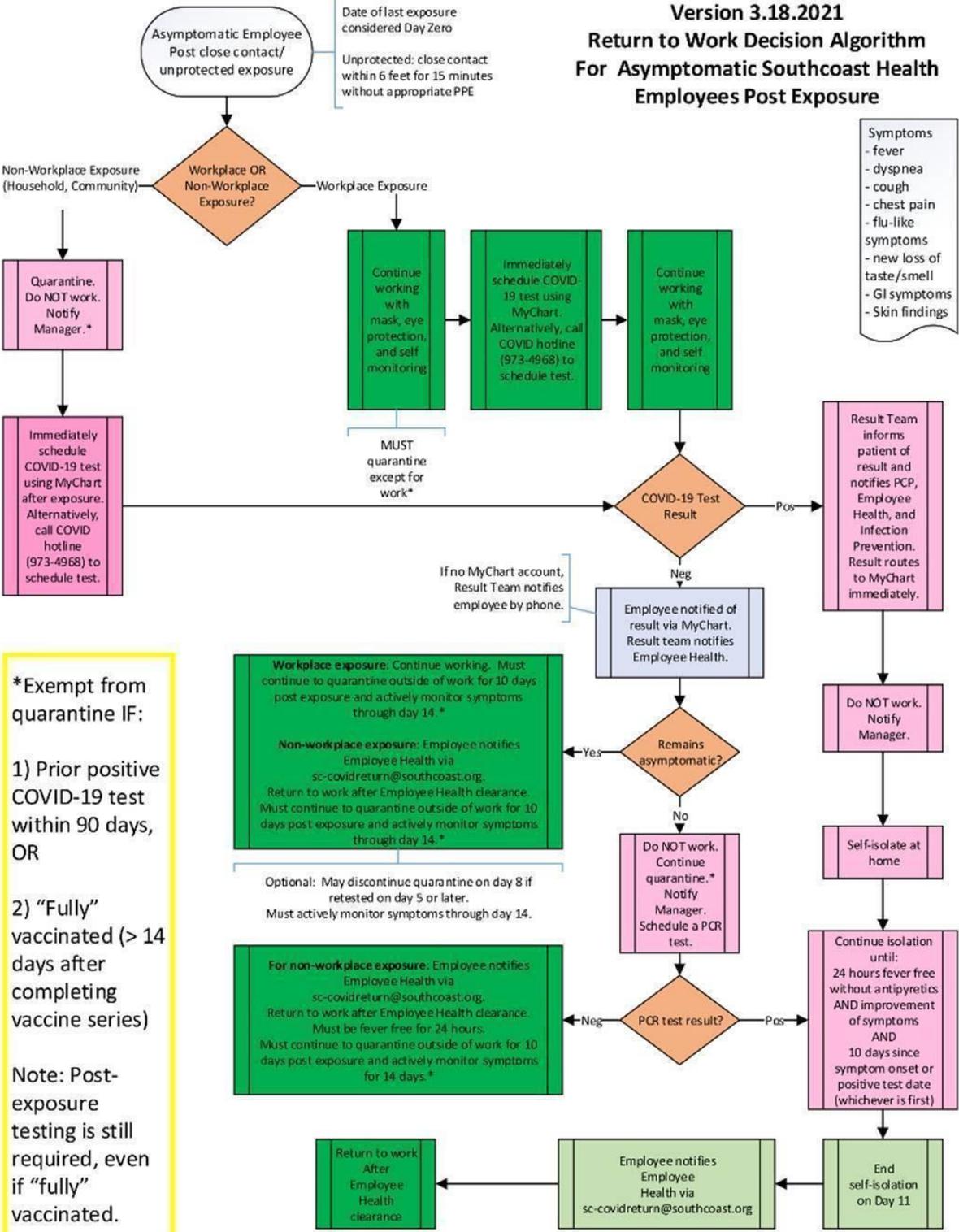
We know the vaccines are very effective at preventing both symptomatic and asymptomatic infection, but the transmission to non-vaccinated persons remains unclarified.

UPDATE: RTW for exposed, asymptomatic & fully vaccinated

The [Return to Work algorithm for asymptomatic employees](#) (pictured below) who have been exposed to COVID-19 has been updated to account for anyone who is fully vaccinated.

Please note that the [RTW algorithm for symptomatic employees](#) has not changed. If an employee is symptomatic, they should not report to work.

Version 3.18.2021
Return to Work Decision Algorithm
For Asymptomatic Southcoast Health
Employees Post Exposure



***Exempt from quarantine IF:**

- 1) Prior positive COVID-19 test within 90 days, OR
- 2) "Fully" vaccinated (> 14 days after completing vaccine series)

Note: Post-exposure testing is still required, even if "fully" vaccinated.

NEW: MA announces Phase IV of reopening; travel advisory

Effective Monday, March 22, all communities in Massachusetts will move into [Step 1 of Phase IV of the state's reopening plan](#).

This will open a range of previously closed business sectors under tight capacity restrictions that are expected to be adjusted over time if favorable trends in the public health data continue.

Also effective on March 22, the Massachusetts Travel Order will be replaced with a Travel Advisory.

The new travel advisory will urge all persons entering Massachusetts, including returning residents, to quarantine for 10 days upon their arrival if they have been out of the state for 24 hours or more.

The advisory does not apply to anyone in the following categories:

- Anyone who is returning to Massachusetts after an absence of fewer than 24 hours
- Travelers who have a negative COVID-19 test result that has been administered up to 72 hours prior to their arrival in Massachusetts
- Workers who enter Massachusetts to perform critical infrastructure functions (as specified by the Federal Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency) while they are commuting to or from or while at work
- Travelers who are fully vaccinated (i.e., who have received two doses of either the Moderna or Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines OR who have received a single dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, 14 days or more ago and who do not have symptoms)

UPDATE: Guidance on in-person meetings & shared breaks

In-person meetings and sharing breaks among fully vaccinated staff can be allowed.

The limitation to 10 people at a given time should be maintained, as the current recommendations are still to avoid medium- to large-sized gatherings in confined indoor spaces.

UPDATE: Southcoast's vaccination program

As of this week, Southcoast has received more than 35,000 doses of vaccine supply from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts since mid-December, with more than 95% administered and the balance of those scheduled in the coming days.

Southcoast Health continues to facilitate vaccination for both the [general public](#) as well as our employees, providers and staff.

When internal appointments are available, you can book them at [Charlton Memorial](#) and [St. Luke's](#).

REMINDER: Safety + Vigilance = Progress

All staff still need to remain vigilant, even if vaccinated and despite the decreasing numbers of positive patients in our hospitals.

Many people in our region have yet to be vaccinated and the COVID-19 virus, including variants, are still circulating.

We all need to continue with employee attestations, entrance screenings, limited visitors, face masking, PPE and handwashing.

For the latest information, please visit Southcoast's [COVID-19 Hub](#) for employees and staff.

Questions? Please email them to faq@southcoast.org.

Thank you, and be well.