

COVID-19 Bulletin

 Southcoast Health

Exclusively for the employees
of Southcoast Health

December 28, 2021

Greetings, Southcoast Colleagues.

In this Bulletin, you will find the following:

- **New CDC guidelines for the general public as of December 27, 2021**
- **Updated Return to Work guidelines for all COVID positive staff**
- **Updated Exposure Definition**
- **Guidelines for disposable and reusable BP cuffs for COVID positive patients**
- **Get your COVID-19 vaccine booster dose at a Southcoast employee walk-in clinic!**

Please scroll through the entire Bulletin for these updates, and be sure to visit Southcoast's [COVID-19 Employee Hub](#).

Thank you.

New CDC guidelines for the general public as of December 27, 2021:

- Per new [guidelines by the CDC](#), the recommended isolation period for the general public with a positive test result has been **decreased to 5**

days from 10 days, followed by 5 days of wearing a mask when around others if **asymptomatic** by day 5.

Quarantine following exposure for the general public has also been **decreased to 5 days** for individuals who are unvaccinated or fully vaccinated more than 6 months ago (Pfizer and Moderna) or 2 months ago (J&J) and have not received a booster. Please refer to the [CDC](#) for more details based on vaccination status.

What does this mean to Southcoast Health and our team of Healthcare Workers:

- There are no changes to isolation guidelines for hospitalized patients
- The CDC now defines “close contact” for healthcare workers not wearing an N95 mask or respirator as a “higher-risk exposure” **IF** the infected patient is not also wearing a facemask or cloth mask.

THERE IS A VITAL NEED TO MASK ALL PATIENTS AT ALL TIMES AS TOLERATED to reduce the risk of transmission. For inpatients, mask when interacting with staff. Keep curtains drawn between beds in semi-private rooms. Comply with all established Infection Prevention and safety practices – hand hygiene, maintaining a 6ft. distance as much as possible, universal masking, cleaning and disinfection of the environment and all patient care equipment, and early testing for the onset of any symptoms.

Updated Return to Work guidelines for all COVID positive staff:

DPH has not yet issued an updated statewide Return to Work (RTW) recommendation, however based on the new guidance from the CDC, Southcoast Health is implementing the following risk-based approach to manage infected staff and RTW:

- **Asymptomatic** – Work restriction **decreased to 7 days** from 10 days isolation (RTW Day 8), with **no RTW testing required**.
- **Symptomatic** – Work restriction **decreased to 7 days** isolation (RTW Day 8) from the start of symptoms and return if no fever for at least 24 hours and symptom improvement, with **no RTW testing required**.

For complete details on exposure, testing, and return to work, refer to [FAQ: Exposure, testing and return to work \(RTW\) for healthcare workers \(updated 12/28/21\)](#).

Refer also to:

[Return to Work Decision Algorithm for Asymptomatic Employees \(updated 12/28/21\)](#).

[Return to Work Decision Algorithm for Symptomatic Employees \(updated 12/28/21\)](#).

Employees who do need to have a COVID-19 test, due to exposure or symptoms, should utilize MyChart to self-schedule their test

- If unable to do so, please call the COVID-19 Employee Hotline at (508) 973-4968 for nurse triage and test scheduling Monday through Saturday, from 8 am - 5 pm.
- The COVID-19 Results line will call you if your result is positive only.
 - Do not call the COVID-19 Results line, they will call you if positive.

Reminder to reserve disposable BP cuffs for COVID positive patients

Disposable BP cuffs are currently available but should be designated for use with COVID-19 POSITIVE/PUI patients to conserve the supply and prevent a shortage.

Reusable BP cuffs should continue to be used whenever possible and need to be cleaned and disinfected after use with the hospital-approved disinfectant wipes.

See policy [Cleaning of Reusable Patient Care Equipment - SHS-CLI-INF-012](#).

Get your COVID-19 vaccine booster dose at a Southcoast employee walk-in clinic!

The schedule for our employee COVID-19 vaccine clinics are posted on the intranet [here](#).

Select a date/time convenient for you and simply walk in. Please complete the consent via the link below in advance of arriving: <https://scapps-internal.southcoast.org/CovidForm>.

All vaccine types are available (Pfizer, Moderna, J&J). Please note that the Center for Disease Control is now recommending that people receive Pfizer or Moderna vaccines, as a primary series and/or as a booster shot.

Thank you, and be well.