

Dear Chief Executives,

COVID-19 close contact isolation rules and Health Care Workers

I write concerning the recent announcement about close contacts in the community no longer having to isolate if they have no COVID-19 symptoms and comply with the [guidelines](#). This change takes effect from 6pm Friday 22 April 2022.

The change removes the requirement for a Health Care Worker (HCW) to seek an exemption to attend work when they have been a close contact. However, because hospitals and health service facilities remain high risk settings, there is still a need to undertake a risk assessment for individuals who are close contacts before attending the workplace.

This means the current risk assessment process that all NSW Health Services and MPSs have been using for close household contacts since 1 January 2022, Managing Health Care Worker Exposures – high COVID-19 community transmission stays in place including the adoption of the following mitigation strategies:

HCW is identified as a household or household-like contact of a person who has COVID-19

- # Household-like is someone who has spent 4 or more hours in the same residence/care facility with an infectious case.

Action

HCW notifies manager they are a close contact.

If the HCW is **asymptomatic** and their absence would pose a significant risk to safe service delivery, as determined by a senior manager, then:

May attend work subject to senior manager approval, with a risk management plan including:

- Daily COVID-19 rapid antigen test (RAT) for 7 days post exposure including on non-work days (HCW's are to be provided with 7 RAT kits).

AND

- PCR test on day 2 & 6 post exposure where feasible (can work while result is pending; use rapid testing platform if available)

AND

For 14 days post exposure

- Careful monitoring for symptoms. If HCW develops symptoms even mild and have a negative RAT test **they are not to attend work** and need to have a PCR test.
- Consider redeploying to lower patient risk area if possible or working from home if practical
- Mask wearing at all times - surgical or N95 as per Clinical Excellence Commission (CEC) guidance
- Do not enter shared spaces such as tearooms and do not participate in any staff gatherings in the workplace where masks are likely to be removed

Potential exposures in the workplace will continue to be assessed utilising the [Health Care Worker COVID-19 Exposure Risk Assessment Matrix](#).

A reminder that the *Public Health (COVID-19 Vaccination of Health Care Workers) Order 2022* which requires all employees to have least two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine remains active. In addition, the requirement to have at least two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine, remains a condition of employment based on the determination of the Secretary made under s116A of the *Health Services Act*. In relation to HCWs in aged care settings, the Commonwealth's vaccination requirements are still applicable.

Yours sincerely

Wayne Jones

Deputy Secretary, Patient Experience and System Performance

22 April 2022

NSW Ministry of Health

ABN 92 697 899 630

1 Reserve Road St Leonards NSW 2065

Locked Mail Bag 961 North Sydney NSW 2059

Tel (02) 9391 9000 Fax (02) 9391 9101

Website www.health.nsw.gov.au