



HQ Return to Work Guidelines Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Revised 29 July 2021

To help prevent the spread of 2019 Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) the Department of Defense (DoD), in coordination with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), have instituted the following transmission-based precautions:

- 1) Stay-home-from-work policy
- 2) Quarantine or Restriction of Movement (ROM)
- 3) Isolation

Personnel who have COVID-19 related symptoms should notify their supervisor and stop going to work immediately.

Personnel who are infected with COVID-19 should be placed under isolation at a healthcare facility, home, or another designated isolation facility. Similarly, close contacts of a COVID-19 positive individual should be tested and self-quarantine. Those exempt include recovered COVID-19 positive persons 90 days after their positive test and fully vaccinated personnel per ref (a) and [CDC guidance](#).

The following guidelines are available in flowchart format at www.southcom.mil/coronavirus to aid staff with their specific scenarios.

Close Contact / Quarantine / Restriction of Movement

- After ¹**close contact** with a person with suspected or confirmed COVID-19, individuals who are not fully vaccinated will quarantine. If no symptoms develop, they may return to work after 14 days after the last exposure. **Asymptomatic close contacts who are fully vaccinated (at least 2 weeks after completing vaccination series) are not required to quarantine. All close contacts, regardless of vaccination status, should be tested for COVID 3-5 days after exposure.**
- Travelers from foreign countries will ROM per DOD guidance. ROM may be shortened from 14 to 7 days if the individual is asymptomatic and tests on/after day 5. **Asymptomatic, fully vaccinated travelers are exempt from ROM requirements. All travelers will test for COVID-19 3-5 days following international travel regardless of vaccination status.**
- Exceptions to policy (ETPs) for ROM for mission essential activities per DOD FHP Supplement #18 must be approved by the SOUTHCOM Chief of Staff. ETP requests will include COVID-19 test results, vaccination status, and risk to mission.
- An individual who is in close contact with a person under investigation (PUI) for COVID-19 does not automatically require a 14-day quarantine **unless** the PUI's viral test result is confirmed as positive.
- While awaiting results, supervisors may temporarily restrict close contacts of PUIs. Supervisors should consult with medical staff to determine potential risk. Isolated individuals **should not return to work until instructed by their supervisor.**

¹Close contact is defined as a) being within 6 feet of a positive COVID-19 individual for a cumulative >15 minutes in a 24 hour time period, during their potentially infectious period (48 hours prior to symptom onset) or positive test (if asymptomatic) to the time they're medically cleared from isolation; or, b) having direct contact with infectious secretions (e.g., being coughed on).

Person Under Investigation (PUI)

- A PUI is defined as an individual with signs and/or symptoms of COVID-19, who either **has a pending test or is advised to get tested**. Personnel identified as a PUI are undergoing a medical evaluation and may not return to work until cleared by their medical provider per ref (a). The medical provider will make a determination whether the PUI: a) tested positive for COVID-19 or b) may have another acute respiratory illness.
- Asymptomatic close contacts in quarantine and asymptomatic individuals being tested for COVID-19 (including via sentinel surveillance) are not classified as a PUI.

Confirmed or Probable Case of COVID-19

After being diagnosed as having COVID-19 (confirmed or probable) by a medical provider, personnel who were directed to care for themselves at home may discontinue isolation and return to work based upon **EACH** of the following clearance criteria:

- At least **10 days** since symptoms first appeared **and**
- At least **24 hours** with no fever (subjective or measured) without the use of fever-reducing medications **and**
- Improvement of symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath, etc.)
- For asymptomatic persons who never develop symptoms, isolation and other precautions may be discontinued 10 days after the date of their first positive viral test.

A test-based strategy is NOT recommended to determine when to discontinue home isolation, except in certain circumstances. These special circumstances include the following: medical providers may consider testing if isolation precautions need to be discontinued earlier than 10 days or later than 14 days for severely immunocompromised persons per CDC guidance.

Retesting is not recommended within the first 3 months after diagnosis, unless new COVID-19 symptoms develop without alternative diagnosis identified.

Other Acute Respiratory Illness

Personnel (including fully vaccinated and previously recovered COVID+ persons) who have symptoms of acute respiratory illness are recommended to **stay home and not return to work** until 7 days after symptoms first appeared, and 24 hours has passed since the following are met without symptom-altering medications:

- No fever without the use of fever-reducing medications or feverish symptoms (e.g. shivering, chills, body aches, etc.)
- Improvement of other illness symptoms (sore throat, persistent cough, sinus congestion, fatigue, etc.)

References: a) USSOUTHCOM Guidance for Close Contacts of COVID Positive Individuals;

b) USSOUTHCOM Guidance for COVID Positive Individuals

For Return to Work flowcharts and more information, please visit the [SOUTHCOM COVID-19 Resource Page](#).