



Return to Work (RTW) Guidelines for Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)

Revised 12 May 2020 (changes in blue are updated guidance)

To help prevent the spread of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), Department of Defense has instituted transmission-based precautions, which include restriction of movement (ROM), quarantine, and isolation. Personnel who have symptoms of acute respiratory illness should notify their supervisor and avoid going to work. Personnel who have a high risk exposure to COVID-19 or who have traveled to high risk locations should be placed under quarantine/restriction of movement (ROM). Personnel who are found to be infected with COVID-19 should be placed under isolation at home or at a designated isolation facility.

The decision to discontinue transmission-based precautions and allow personnel to return to work (RTW) is based on balancing the potential benefits of decreasing transmission with minimizing social disruption.

Quarantine / ROM

- After **travel to a high risk location** (per CDC policy in CONUS and local policy¹ OCONUS) or **close contact² with COVID-19** positive case (or suspected case when operationally feasible), individuals should be placed on quarantine/ROM for **14 days**.
- Personnel may RTW if no symptoms develop after **14 days** since the date of departure from high risk location or the last date of contact with the individual with COVID-19, if they remain free of symptoms. One **cannot test-out** of ROM before 14 days have elapsed; you must complete the full 14-day period.
- Individuals with **close contact with a patient under investigation (PUI)** for COVID-19 do not need to be placed on 14-day ROM unless result of PUI's lab test is confirmed to be positive. While awaiting results, commanders may temporarily restrict close contacts of PUIs from work. Commanders should consult with medical staff and balance the likelihood of a PUI becoming a positive case versus mission requirement when making their decision.
- Some personnel who are considered mission critical may complete modified quarantine/ROM requirements if they remain asymptomatic. Refer to Force Health Protection Guidance (Supplement 8) for additional details.

¹ Personnel living within high risk locations per CDC THN are not subject to domestic ROM policy and should follow local guidance on ROM.

² Close contact is defined as a) being within 6 feet of a COVID-19 case for a prolonged period (>10 minutes); close contact can occur while caring for, living with, or visiting a COVID-19 case; or, b) having direct contact with infectious secretions (e.g., being coughed on). Close contact is only considered during the COVID-19 case's potentially infectious period, defined as from 48 hours prior to symptom onset (or positive test if asymptomatic) to time the case is placed in isolation.

Patient Under Investigation (PUI)

A PUI is defined as an individual with sign and symptoms of COVID-19 who either has a test pending or would have been tested had a test been available. The individual is no longer a PUI when their COVID-19 test has been returned or have met criteria for return to work. Asymptomatic individuals quarantined due to their status as a close contact with a COVID-19 positive person are not classified as a PUI. In addition, asymptomatic individuals being tested for COVID-19 are not considered PUIs while awaiting test results. Personnel identified as a PUI are undergoing a medical evaluation and **may not RTW** until cleared by their medical provider. The medical provider will make a determination whether the PUI is: a COVID-19 case or considered to have another acute respiratory illness.

COVID-19 Case (Confirmed or Probable COVID-19 Case)

After being diagnosed as having COVID-19 (confirmed or probable) by a clinician, personnel may RTW using one of the following clearance criteria:

1. Symptom-based method:
 - At least **72 hours** have passed since resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and improvement of other symptoms of illness (e.g., cough, shortness of breath, loss of smell, headache, etc.); **AND**
 - At least **14 days** have passed since symptoms first appeared or from date of positive test if asymptomatic.
2. Test-based method (using an FDA Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) approved molecular assay for detection of SARS-CoV-2 RNA):
 - Resolution of fever, without use of fever-reducing medication (e.g. acetaminophen, etc.); **AND**
 - Improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); **AND**
 - Negative results from at least two consecutive specimens collected ≥ 24 hours apart (total of two negative specimens)

Other Acute Respiratory Illness (i.e. flu and influenza like illnesses):

Stay Home from Work

Personnel who have symptoms of acute respiratory illness are recommended to stay home and not report to work until **7 days** has passed since symptoms first appeared **and 72 hours** has pass since the following are met, without the use of fever-reducing or other symptom-altering medicines:

- Resolution of fever (subjective or measured) or fever symptoms (shivering, chills, body aches, etc.) and
- Improvement of other illness symptoms (sore throat, persistent cough, sinus congestion, fatigue, etc.)



Return to Work (RTW) Flowchart Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)

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