

## COVID-19 Isolation: Guidance for GW Employees Who Have Tested Positive for COVID-19

### Introduction

Your COVID-19 test is positive, which means you have been infected with the COVID-19 virus. You must self-isolate immediately. We understand this may be unsettling news but the university has your safety and care as a top priority and has developed the necessary measures to help you recover as quickly as possible. The GW Campus COVID-19 Support Team (CCST) will be contacting you very soon to discuss your COVID-19 test result.

There are several important steps you must take now:

1. Begin self-isolation at home.
2. Notify your supervisor you are sick and will not be reporting to work. You do not need to tell them your COVID-19 test was positive.
3. Contact GW Occupational Health.
4. Monitor your symptoms and seek medical care immediately for any serious symptoms such as shortness of breath, chest discomfort, or feeling faint.
5. Be prepared for CCST/DC Health Department follow-up.

### Step 1: Begin Self-Isolation at Home

Isolation is used to separate people infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 from people who are not infected. The total length of time that you are in self-isolation will depend on how long you are experiencing symptoms (symptomatic). Some people who test positive for COVID-19 are asymptomatic meaning they do not have any symptoms. Both symptomatic and asymptomatic individuals need to isolate. You will be in self-isolation for at least 10 days, perhaps longer if you develop symptoms. While you are in isolation, a hold will be placed on your GWorld card restricting your access to campus spaces.

#### *Self-Isolation Instructions:*

- Stay in your home for the entire isolation period except for medical emergencies.
- If you live alone, many grocery stores and pharmacies offer delivery. A friend or relative may also bring you the supplies you need, however they should not spend significant time in your home.
- Avoid contact with others and prohibit visitors who do not have an essential need to be in your home.
- As much as possible, stay in a specific room and away from other people who live in your home. Use a separate bathroom, if available. Restrict contact with pets and other animals while you are sick. More guidelines for isolating in your home where you live with others can be found here: [Living in Shared Housing](#)
- Wear a face mask when you are around other people (e.g., sharing a room or vehicle) or pets, and before you enter a healthcare provider's office. If you are short of breath when wearing a mask, then people who live with you should wear a face covering if they are in the same room as you.
- Clean your hands often: wash with soap and water, at least 20 seconds, or although less preferable, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol, covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry.



- Wash your hands especially after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; going to the bathroom; and before eating or preparing food.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes. Throw used tissues in a lined trash can and clean your hands immediately.
- Clean and disinfect your space, especially any shared areas such as bathrooms and kitchens. More details can be found here: [Cleaning And Disinfecting Your Home](#).
- For additional isolation guidance, please see [DC Health's isolation instructions](#). If you have household members or intimate partners, please share [DC Health's guidelines for household members](#).

### **Step 2: Notify Your Supervisor**

As you would for any illness which would keep you out of work, you should notify your supervisor that you are sick and will not be reporting to work. You do not need to tell them that your COVID-19 test was positive. Additionally, the GW CCST will contact you very soon to discuss your COVID-19 test result and review the isolation instructions.

### **Step 3: Call GW Occupational Health**

GW Occupational Health can be reached 24 hours a day and 7 days per week by calling **202-677-6230**. Occupational Health is the only unit authorized to medically clear you to return to campus. When you call, a screening will be conducted for COVID-19 symptoms. Medical care will be provided via tele-health and follow up care or further testing will also be provided if needed. There will be no charge for your first tele-health visit, but any follow up testing or healthcare services will be billed to your insurance. You may choose to seek care from your personal physician; however, you must still call Occupational Health so that you can be cleared to return to campus.

You are to remain in isolation until:

- **At least 10 days\*** have passed since your symptoms first started **and**
- **At least 72 hours** have passed with no fever without taking fever-reducing medication **and**
- Your symptoms have markedly improved.

If you tested positive but never had any symptoms, then you must wait until at least 10 days have passed since you were tested.

**You must contact GW Occupational Health to end your isolation.**

*\* Persons who experienced severe illness should consult with their providers, as they may have to isolate until 20 days have passed since symptoms first started.*

### **Step 4: Monitor Yourself for Symptoms**

GW Occupational Health will give you instructions on how to care for yourself at home. They will also review instructions on when to seek medical care immediately.

- Symptoms may include: fever (subjective or 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit),



chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, or otherwise feeling unwell.

- If you experience any of the following warning signs, seek immediate medical care: Difficulty breathing, shortness of breath, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion, inability to wake or stay awake, bluish lips or face.

Treat your Symptoms:

- There is no known cure for COVID-19 infection. Treatment is supportive.
- Hydrate well.
- Control your fever. Use acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol) if possible. Try not to use Advil/Motrin/Ibuprofen or Aleve.
- Rest.
- Stay well nourished.

### **Step 5: Be Prepared for CCST/DC Health Department Follow-up**

A member of the GW CCST and someone from your local health department will reach out to conduct an interview. These interviews will include collecting information on the following:

- Symptoms
- Clinical history
- Information about your activities and close contacts starting 48 hours before your COVID-19 symptoms appeared or your positive test result

Your information will remain confidential and is collected only to inform public health action such as contacting those who need to be quarantined to prevent further spread. For additional information on this process, please see the [CDC's contact tracing fact sheet](#).

### **Contact Information:**

- GW Occupational Health: 202-677-6230 [Occupational Health | The School of Medicine & Health Sciences](#)
- Medical Emergencies: On campus: 202-994-6111/Off campus: 911
- Campus COVID-19 Support Team: [ccst@gwu.edu](mailto:ccst@gwu.edu)

Frequently Asked Questions:

- 1. What is isolation?** Isolation means staying completely separate from others. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), isolation is a measure taken to separate people who have tested positive for COVID-19 away from others who are not sick.
- 2. How is isolation different from quarantine?** Isolation separates sick people from people who are not sick, while quarantine separates and restricts the movement of people who were exposed to see if they become sick.
- 3. How long does isolation last?** Generally, 10 days but it depends on when symptoms started and the severity of your illness. Please speak with GW Occupational Health to discuss your specific situation.



- 4. Will I or my insurance be charged for COVID-19 testing and care from Occupational Health?** You will not be charged for the COVID-19 surveillance testing. If your COVID-19 test is positive and you have symptoms, an initial tele-health visit with a provider in Occupational Health will be covered by the University with no charge to you or your insurance. However, if it is determined you need additional medical care beyond that, your insurance will be billed under the standard procedures used for all patients in the Medical Faculty Associates (MFA). You may have deductibles or co-pays depending on your insurance plan. You will not be charged for follow up calls to clear you for return to campus or for calling Occupational Health with other questions.
- 5. Can I go to my own primary care doctor if I want?** Yes. However, you must still call Occupational Health if you have a positive COVID-19 test. Occupational Health is the only office that can clear you to return to campus when your isolation period ends.
- 6. If I am scheduled for a tele-health appointment through Occupational Health, what do I do to prepare?** If you are scheduled for a tele-health appointment, you will be given information on how to register as a patient in the MFA and instructions on how to have the visit on your computer or mobile device. Occupational Health will use a version of Zoom that is secure for sharing health information. You should prepare to discuss the details of your symptoms and when they started. You should be prepared to answer questions about any past medical history, allergies, and all medications that you are taking. Writing this information down, with any questions you have for the provider ahead of time is a good idea. The following tips will help avoid any technical difficulties:
- Follow the instructions sent to you when the appointment is scheduled and use the web-link and password provided.
  - Find a private location with good lighting.
  - Test your web-cam, microphone and speakers ahead of time.
  - If using a mobile device, make sure it is fully charged.
  - Make sure you have a reliable internet connection. In general, a wired internet connection is more reliable than Wi-Fi or cellular service.
- 7. Can I still work from home?** If you have no symptoms or mild symptoms, and feel well enough, you may be able to work from home if you are in a job that allows tele-work. You should first discuss this with your supervisor.
- 8. How will my medical information be kept private by Occupational Health?** Occupational Health will follow the MFA [privacy policies](#). Only your work status and whether you cleared to return to campus, will be shared with the University without any other details of your care.
- 9. Will there be more services offered through Occupational Health?** Yes. We are planning an Influenza Vaccine program for all campus community members in October. While not yet available, we are working with the University to establish other services for pre-placement job assessments, care for workplace injuries and any special testing that may be required for some jobs on campus.

For more COVID-19 information, check out the [CDC's COVID-19 factsheet](#).

