



Prompt identification and isolation of potentially ill employees is critical to preventing the spread of illness to patients and other health care staff. Identifying those employees before they enter the hospital is ideal. Symptom screening is a way employers can lower the chance of COVID-19 transmission in the workplace. Screening will not identify people not showing symptoms yet, or who may be infected but show no symptoms. It is important to remember the number and type of employee or other classification of persons providing care within the hospital (i.e. students, residents, physicians, etc.).

Who should be screened?

All staff, faculty, students and residents entering the facility regardless of clinical contact. Hospitals also should think through how they screen contractors, vendors and others.

What should be included in the screen?

Hospital policies and procedures should reflect the approved practices of hospital and medical leadership; local/state/federal requirements; and guidance offered by national experts such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and others.

The hospital is not required to ask the following questions in the manner presented below. These are suggested questions a hospital may ask for screening purposes. Some hospitals use modified questions and answers (i.e. 'sore throat' may be 'sore throat different from seasonal allergies')

1. Do you have any of these symptoms that are not caused by a known condition unrelated to COVID-19?
 - fever (>100.0) or chills
 - cough
 - shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
 - fatigue
 - muscle or body aches
 - headache
 - recent loss of taste or smell
 - sore throat
 - congestion
 - nausea or vomiting
 - diarrhea
2. Within the past 14 days, have you had contact with anyone that you know had COVID-19 or COVID-19-like symptoms?

Contact is being 6 feet (2 meters) or closer for more than 15 minutes in a 24-hour period with a person or having direct contact with fluids from a person with COVID-19 (for example, being coughed or sneezed on).
3. Have you had a positive COVID-19 test for active virus in the past 10 days?
4. Within the past 14 days, has a public health or medical professional told you to self-monitor, self-isolate or self-quarantine because of concerns about COVID-19 infection?



When should an employee not come to work and notify the hospital?

- tested positive for COVID-19 and has not completed the required quarantine time.
- employee has a fever or chills AND one-two additional symptoms

How should a hospital set up symptom screening?

There are a variety of ways the hospital may choose to screen employees before a shift worked. Whatever the process used, hospitals must ensure staff have had adequate training and know who to contact in the event they are not feeling well, suspect possible exposure or identify symptoms during the screening.

In-Person Screening

Before admittance into the hospital, each employee should be screened for presence for fever and other signs or symptoms suggesting of acute illness.

- If you plan in-person health checks, do them safely and respectfully. Employers should use social distancing, barriers or walls, and personal protective equipment to protect the screener.
- In some facilities, a kiosk is used where the employee's temperature is taken without the assistance of an in-person screener. Employees must readily know who to contact if they have a fever or other signs suggestive of acute illness, if they suspect something is wrong with the kiosk, or other questions or concerns arise. If another employee is in person to help with such issues, again, full PPE should be used to protect the person facilitating screening. If no one is available in person, the hospital might consider large boards that contain simple instructions on the screening process and who to notify with symptoms or questions.
- In other situations, such as home health, the hospital may establish a self-attestation process. These employees often do not report to the hospital or clinic every day before seeing patients.
- Give screening information in languages that staff understand.
- Do health checks in a way that keep people from crowding, such as offering more than one screening entrance into the building or segregating staff entrances from those for patients and visitors.
- To prevent stigma and discrimination, make staff health screenings as private as you can. Do not judge staff based on race or country of origin.
- How a hospital documents which employees screened and how they were screened is up to the hospital. There should be some mechanism of overall attestation to following the screening and reporting process. This is being accomplished differently based upon hospitals, policy and procedures. Examples of one-time attestation forms, attestation through daily timekeeping, utilization of special apps and logs have been considered. Most importantly, hospitals should have a specified procedure that is consistently adhered to.
- Keep medical status and history safe from others. Follow guidance from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission for safe keeping of medical records from health checks.

Self-Monitoring

- Some employees may be asked to monitor daily for signs or symptoms suggestive of acute illness and report to the hospital's occupational health staff.

What OSHA requirements must an employer follow when conducting health screenings, temperature checks, or COVID-19 testing?

If a health screening or temperature check is performed and the hospital chooses to create records of the information, those records might qualify as medical records under the Access to Employee Exposure and Medical Records standard, 29 CFR 1910.1020. The hospital then would be required to retain those records for the duration of each worker's employment, plus 30 years, and follow confidentiality requirements. As explained above, employers need not make a record of temperatures when they screen workers, but instead may acknowledge a temperature reading in real time. In addition, temperature records do not qualify as medical records under the Access to Employee Exposure and Medical Records standard unless they are made or maintained by a physician, nurse, or other health care personnel technician.



Can a hospital require staff to continue working if they have been exposed or before their quarantine period is over?

The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends health care workers with high-risk exposure, either at work or in the community, participate in voluntary quarantine for 14 days after exposure. Hospitals may experience staffing shortages that cannot otherwise be resolved and may need to rely on the flexibilities outlined by the CDC to [mitigate crisis staffing shortages](#). This includes situations where staff who are either exposed or positive may return to work. Inconsistencies in information and direction provided to staff and hospitals by local public health departments create a barrier to the ability to assign staff during critical shortages. During the 14-day incubation period, staff must be screened and stop work immediately should they become symptomatic or test positive. Additionally, taking certain considerations outlined by the CDC into account, staff who have tested positive may return to work prior to traditional return-to-work guidelines set forth by the CDC. Hospitals should have policies, and procedures in place, based on the latest CDC guidance, ensure adherence to those policies and communicate such policies to local health officials. MHA developed a [fact sheet](#) on mitigating crisis staffing shortages.

Resources:

- OSHA Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19: <https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf>
- OSHA Guidance on Returning to Work: <https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA4045.pdf>

The following are some example forms obtained from hospitals:

- [COVID Attestation For Workforce Members](#)
- [Occupational Health Screening Tool](#)
- [Employee Exposure Guidelines](#)
- [Patient Screening Sign](#)
- [Employee Entry and Screening](#)