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THE JOURNAL

COVID-19 Symptom screening and Monitoring Update

# GUIDELINES FOR COVID-19 SYMPTOMS MONITORING AND MANAGEMENT OF WORKERS

## Screening employees

According to the Department of Employment and Labour Direction, employers have a legal obligation to screen all employees for COVID-19 related symptoms prior to entry into the workplace. If an employee displays COVID-19 related symptoms, such symptoms should be reported to a designated person and/or occupational health practitioner in order for a decision to be made as to the staff members continued attendance at work.

## COVID – 19 Signs and Symptoms

Current symptoms for a COVID-19 case include: a cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, loss of taste/smell, with or without any additional symptoms as outlines in the attached symptom monitoring sheet, in the past 24 hours.

**WHAT'S NEW?**
The revised definition has removed fever as a key symptom, and replaced this with loss of smell or loss of taste.

Fever on its own is not currently a primary screening criterion by the NICD as there are many causes of a fever.

If a worker reports with any of the above-mentioned symptoms, they should not be permitted to work. If the employee is already at work they should be provided with a surgical mask and referred to the designated staff at the workplace so that arrangements can be made for clinical evaluation by a health clinic, family practitioner, primary care clinic or COVID-19 hotline.

If a health professional determines that a test is necessary, the employee should quarantine while awaiting results.

If the health professional believes that a COVID-19 infection is unlikely, the employee should be placed on paid sick leave or if the employee's sick leave has been depleted, claim an illness benefit from the Unemployment Insurance Fund.

On receiving their results, the employee should notify the designated person at their workplace. The designated person in the workplace should proactively take steps to obtain this information to avoid any delays in reporting.

## Procedure to follow based on different scenarios:

Scenario 1: Worker with a confirmed positive COVID-19 test

Scenario 1 (COVID-19 confirmed in a worker), will require self-isolation of staff member for 10 days after symptom onset (mild cases) and 10 days after clinical stability (severe cases).

**WHAT'S NEW?**
The recommended isolation period for patients with confirmed Covid-19 infection is reduced from 14 days to 10 days.

Report the case to the NICD and the Department of Employment and Labour.

Scenario 2: Worker with current flu-like symptoms

Any staff in with direct COVID-19 contact who develops an acute respiratory infection (e.g. cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, loss of sense of taste/smell) with or without fever (≥37.5°C) or history of fever (e.g. night sweats, chills) is a suspected COVID-19 case.

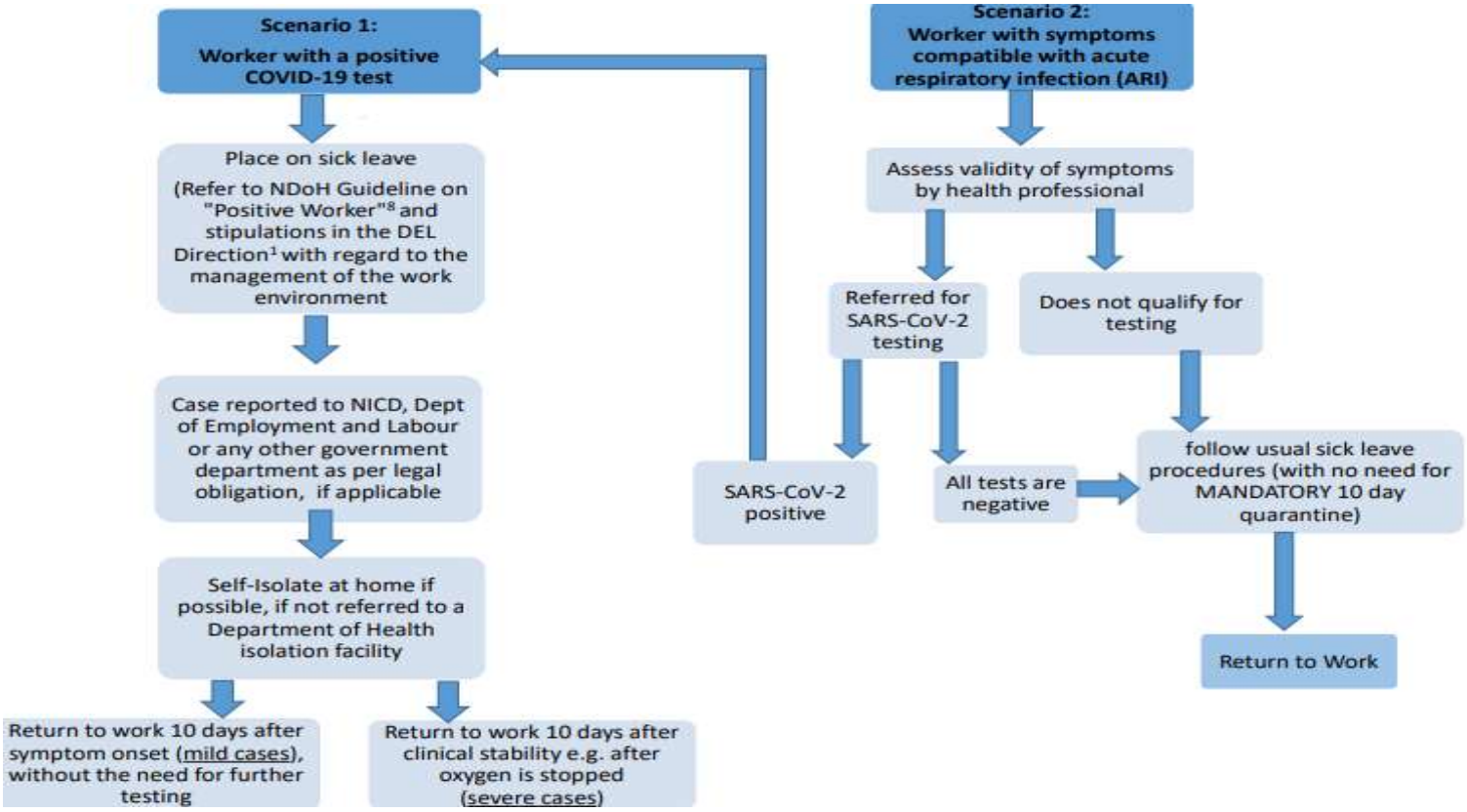
Complete the NICD symptoms form and select appropriate worker tick box PLUS notify the NICD. Perform SARS-C0V-2 RT-PCR testing if medical practitioner suspects that the worker is a person under investigation (PUI) for COVID-19.

**If the test is positive:**

- Follow scenario 1 (self-isolation for 10 days)

**If the test is negative:**

- Staff, with a negative test, but high-risk COVID-19 exposure and COVID-19 compatible symptoms should discuss the need for further testing and/or self-quarantine with an occupational health practitioner.
- If an alternate diagnosis is made (e.g. influenza), the return to work should be based on that diagnosis (usual sick leave procedure).



Scenario 3: High risk, confirmed COVID-19 exposure, asymptomatic

**High risk exposure: close contact within 1 metre of a COVID-19 confirmed case for >15 minutes without PPE (no face mask / eye cover)** or with failure of PPE or direct contact with respiratory secretions of confirmed COVID-19 case.

Line manager should assess and confirm COVID-19 exposure risk. Staff member to self-isolate and perform daily symptom self-check and complete symptom monitoring form until 10 days since last COVID-19 exposure.

If asymptomatic through day 10, return to work can be considered for all workers.

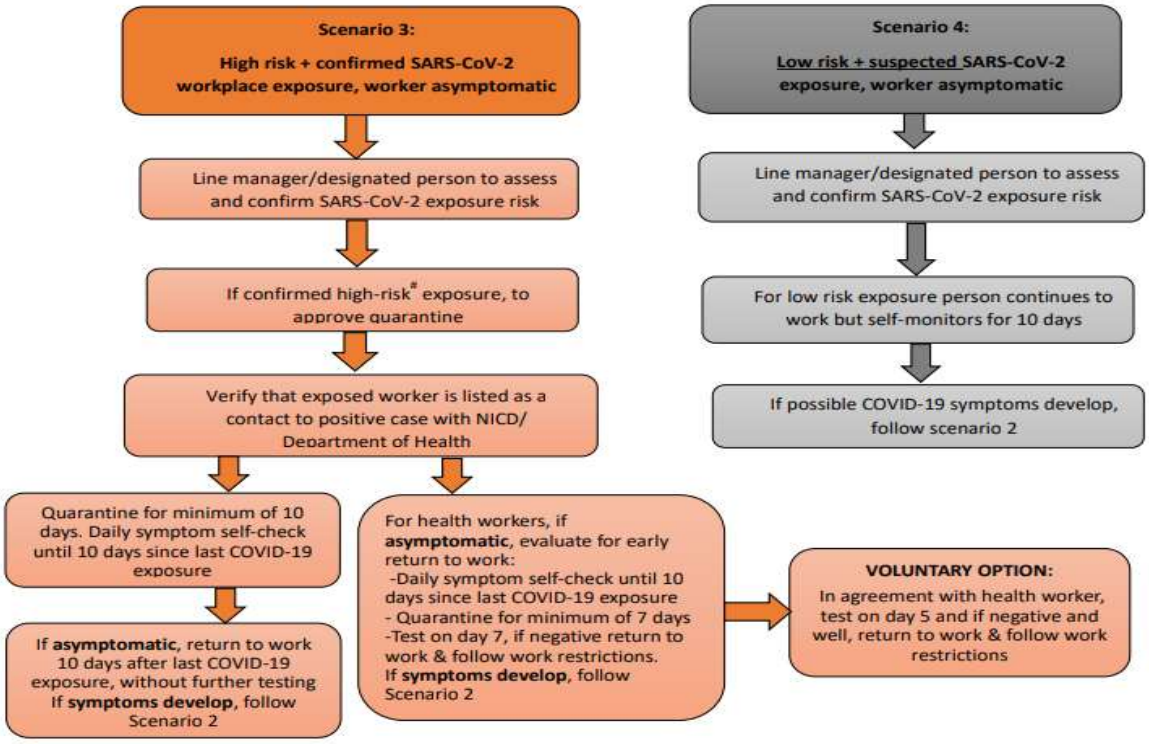
**WHAT'S NEW?**
The decision to return to work of an asymptomatic worker with high exposure risk originally referred to workers in the essential services. This now applies to all workers.

Scenario 4: Low risk, suspected COVID-19 exposure, asymptomatic

**Low risk exposure: >1 metre away from a COVID-19 confirmed case for < 15 minutes OR within 1 meter but wearing PPE (face mask, eye cover)**.

Also consider lower risk if COVID case was wearing a surgical mask.

Line manager should assess and confirm COVID-19 exposure risk. For low-risk exposures a worker can continue to work with self-monitoring (daily symptom check) for 10 days after last COVID19 exposure.



**NOTE:** Repeat testing is NOT required in order to de-isolate and is not recommended.

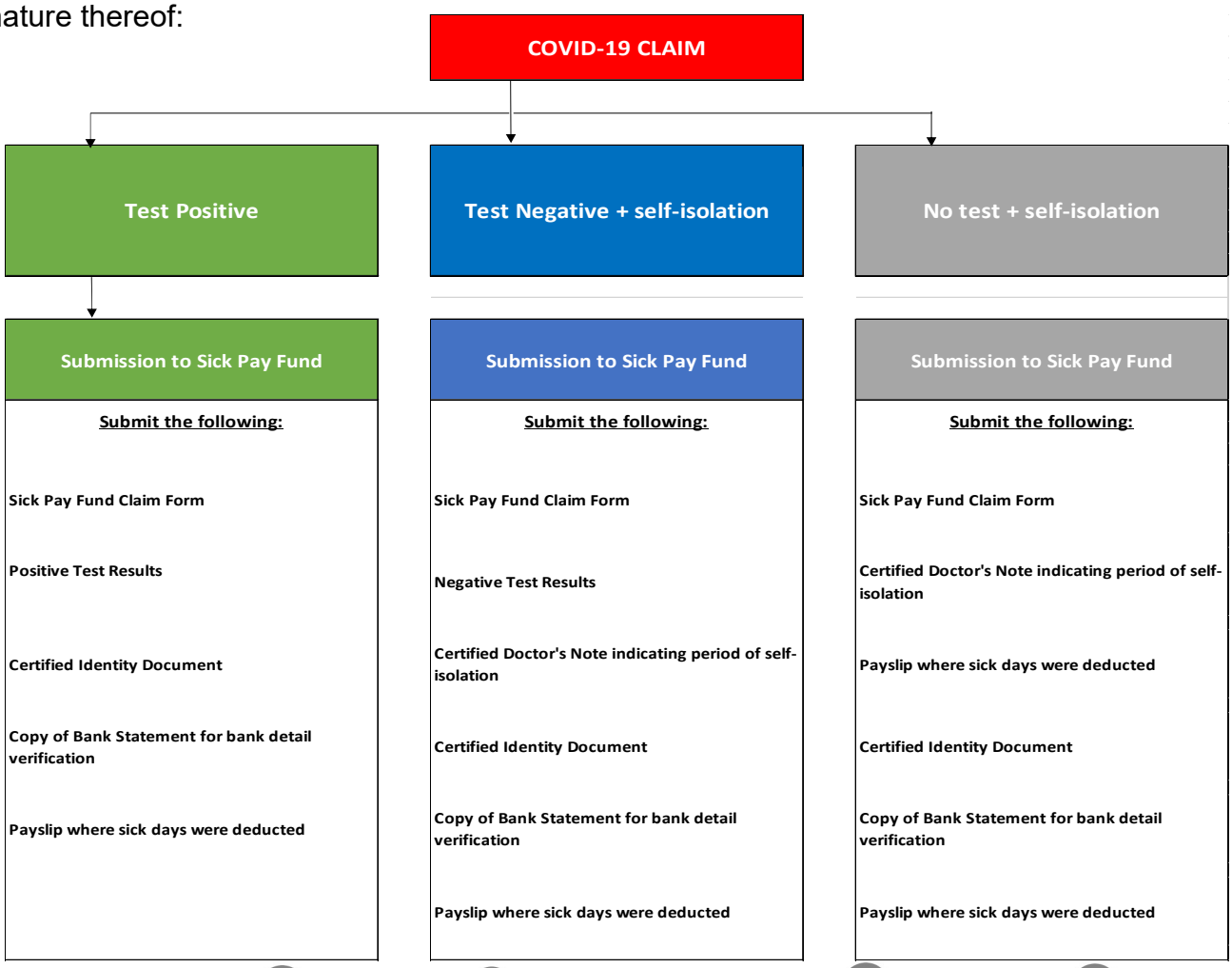
It is common to continue to have symptoms for longer than the above time periods. Full recovery may take several weeks, especially for symptoms such as fatigue, cough and anosmia. Employees who are still symptomatic at the end of their isolation period can be de-isolated provided that their fever has resolved and their other symptoms have shown improvement.

## Claims:

### Bargaining Council's Sick Pay Fund

When an employee is required to self-quarantine under the instruction of a medical practitioner, the employee can claim compensation from the Sick Pay Fund provided that the employee submits a medical certificate reflecting the dates that the employee is booked off.

Please note that the National Sick Pay Fund of the National Bargaining Council for the Hairdressing, Cosmetology, Beauty and Skincare Industry recently released a new rule in terms of all Covid-19 related sick claims. Below a flow chart of what needs to be submitted for each claim depending on the nature thereof:



- Claims must be completed on the SPF Claim Form, obtainable from any Council Office or their website at www.hcsbc.co.za
- **The claim must be accompanied by:**
  - The original or certified copy of the medical certificate in the case of a negative test or where you went into self-isolation. In the case of a positive test, only the test results need to be submitted.
  - The original or certified copy of the bank account.
  - A certified copy of the member's identity document (only a copy if the ID Document is on the Council's system)
  - Written confirmation of the Employer, Working Employer or Legal Owner, stating the period of absence.
  - Salary advice slip/ payslip indicating both the member's gross and nett salary and proof that the contributions to the SPF and the days off sick have been deducted.
- **Calculation of the claim will be done as follows:**
  - There are two groups of 33 days available for Sick Leave, over a 3 (three) year period, from the day the Council receives the first payment.
    - 33 (thirty-three) days in a 3 (three) year cycle for being absent from the workplace for any period of time less than 6 (six) days and,
    - 33 (thirty-three) days in a 3 (three) year cycle for being absent from the workplace for a continued 7(seven) days and more.
  - **The payment period for a virus claim will be determined as follows:**
    - in respect of the 6-day period: the remaining days available to the member within the payment cycle x 10 (ten) days, divided by 33 days;
    - in respect of the 7-day period: the remaining days available to the member within the payment cycle x 23 (twenty-three) days, divided by 33 days
  - **A virus claim will be limited to:**
    - the number of days indicated on the medical certificate submitted; and
    - 75% of the total claim instituted by the member against the SPF
- Nothing contained in this clause 5.10 shall limit a member's right to claim any shortfall, not paid by the SPF relating to a virus claim, from the Unemployment Insurance Fund (if applicable).

- **The Covid-19 claims can be explained with a practical example:**
  - For a Covid-19 claim, the days available for the claim to succeed will be determined by looking at both the balances left on the employee's total leave entitlement. A maximum of 10 days will be allocated from the short sick leave and a maximum of 23 days will be allocated from the long sick days. Therefore, the Covid-19 claim will be limited to 33 days. Please note that this is not an additional 33 days granted but will be taken from the existing entitlement.
  - **The process will be as follows:**
    - We check how many short sick days are available and calculate the short sick days available for a Covid-19 claim (Available short sick days x 10 / 33) (Example: Employee has 12 short sick days left = 12 x (10/33) = 4 days)
    - We check how many long sick days are available and calculate the long sick days available for a Covid-19 claim (Available long sick days x 23 / 33) (Example: Employee has 30 long sick days left = 30 x (23/33) = 21 days)
    - The total of the above will then indicate how many days is available for a Covid-19 claim (Example: Total days available for a Covid-19 claim = 4 short sick days + 21 long sick days = 25 days total)
    - The number of days the employee has been booked off by a medical professional (a doctor's note will be required) is then determined (Example: employee is booked of for 14 days)
    - This then means the Sick Pay Fund will be able to calculate the claim on the full 14 days since the employee has 25 days available
    - The claim then gets calculated as any other Sick Pay Fund claim based on the rate per day. The difference however is that the value of the claim will be limited to 75% as per clause 5.10.5.2
- The Council, provided that all documentation has been received, pays claims within 2 (two) weeks after received.

All claims for the Sick Pay Fund can be handed in to the Agent in your area, or e-mailed to sickpayfund@hcsbc.co.za, or contact 011 760 1685 and ask to speak to the Sick Pay Fund Administrator.

Workman's Compensation

If an employee has contracted COVID-19 during the course of their employment they can lodge a claim with the Compensation Fund.

Procedure to lodge a claim:

- First time users should first register themselves on the Department of Labour website by following the link: https://cfonline.labour.gov.za/OnlineSubmissions/wicket/bookmarkable/za.gov.labour.cf.RegisterOrganization?1
- Once registered, proceed to the Workman's compensation site to register the occupational disease. Link to CompEasy site: https://compeasy.labour.gov.za/fiori
- Should online submissions not be possible, the employer must complete the WCL1, WCL 14, WCL 110, COVID -19 Exposure and medical assessment, along with a copy of the employee's ID document and send it through to covid19claims@labour.gov.za.

Useful contact details:

- Bargaining Council Sick Pay Fund: (http://hcsbc.co.za/) sickpayfund@hcsbc.co.za or phone 086 142 7227

- Compensation Fund: CompEasy (www.labour.gov.za) COVID19claims@labour.gov.za or phone 0860 105 350

- Rand Mutual Assurance: CompCare (www.randmutual.co.za) contactcentre@randmutual.co.za or phone 086 022 2132

- Federated Employers Mutual: IMS (https:llroe.fem.co.za) FEM-Registry@fema.co.za or phone 011 359 4300

Returning to work

All employees returning to work after isolation or quarantine period, should follow general work restrictions that include:

• undergoing medical evaluation to confirm that they are fit to work should they have moderate or severe illness

• wearing of surgical masks at all times while at work for a period of 21 days from the initial test

• implement social distancing measures as appropriate

• adherence to hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene, and cough etiquette

• continued self-monitoring for symptoms and seek medical re-evaluation if respiratory symptoms recur or worsen

**References**

Guidelines for symptom monitoring and management of workers for SARS-CoV-2 infection (Version 5). Department of Health. 19 August 2020. Available from: https://www.nicd.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/V5-Guidelines-for-symptom-monitoring-and-management-of-workers-for-COVID_19_19aug20.pdf (accessed 27 August 2020)

Notice on compensation for occupationally acquired novel corona virus disease (COVID-19) under compensation for occupational injuries and diseases Act, 130 of 1993 as amended. Department of Labour. 23 March 2020. Available from: https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/202003/43126gen193.pdf (accessed 27 August 2020)

Reduction in the isolation period for patients with confirmed COVID 19 infection. National Institute for Communicable Diseases. 20 July 2020. Available from https://www.nicd.ac.za/reduction-in-the-isolation-period-for-patients-with-confirmed-covid-19-infection/ (accessed 27 August 2020)

Rules of the National Bargaining Council for Hairdressing, Cosmetology, Beauty and Skincare Industry Sick Pay Fund

Kind Regards,

The EOHCB Team