If you are a healthcare worker who has had a known high-risk exposure to a patient(s) with confirmed COVID-19, you should take extra care to monitor your health but can keep working if you can be closely monitored by the facility’s occupational health program and adhere to all requirements for self-monitoring. There is no requirement for 14-day quarantine of healthcare workers with high-risk exposures in the setting of sustained community transmission as we have in multiple areas of the State of Michigan.

Healthcare worker with High-Risk exposure to a confirmed or probable COVID-19 patient

High-risk exposures include:

1) An unmasked provider having prolonged close contact (<6 feet for more than a few minutes) with an unmasked confirmed COVID-19 patient

2) A provider not wearing eye protection while present for an aerosol generating procedure (e.g. cardiopulmonary resuscitation, intubation, extubation, bronchoscopy, nebulizer therapy, sputum induction)

3) An unmasked provider present for an aerosol generating procedure. MDHHS asks that you self-monitor at least twice daily for symptoms (subjective fever or measured temp >100.0°F, or cough, or shortness of breath or sore throat) AND additional new onset lower acuity symptoms that may be associated with early signs of infection with COVID-19 including muscle aches, or malaise (feeling tired or run down), runny nose, or stuffiness or congestion.

Timing of these checks should be at least eight hours apart with one check immediately before each healthcare shift. If any of these signs/symptoms develop then you MAY NOT come to work. If symptoms develop at work, you MUST immediately leave the patient care area, isolate yourself and notify your supervisor.

Additional precautions for asymptomatic healthcare workers exposed to a possible or confirmed COVID-19 patient:
In the context of sustained community transmission of COVID-19, all healthcare workers are at some risk for exposure at work and within the community. CDC has advised that healthcare facilities consider allowing asymptomatic healthcare workers exposed to a confirmed COVID-19 patient to work while wearing a surgical mask.

MDHHS again stresses that ALL providers should be self-monitoring and if sick, stay home.

Given the limited availability of personal protective equipment, use of surgical masks by asymptomatic exposed providers at work should be limited to:

- Those who have had known high-risk exposures or are involved in care of vulnerable patients (e.g., age ≥50, chronic lung disease (e.g., asthma, COPD), heart disease, diabetes, immunocompromised)
Testing of asymptomatic healthcare workers:
In keeping with CDC guidance, MDHHS advises against testing asymptomatic individuals with or without an exposure to COVID-19, including healthcare workers, especially given current shortages in PPE, collection swabs, viral transport media and testing reagents.

Healthcare workers should not be tested as a precondition of returning to work since a negative test result does not provide assurance that that healthcare workers will not develop symptoms of COVID-19 after they are tested within 14 days of a high-risk exposure.

However, while it is not yet known what role asymptomatic infection plays in transmission, if testing is done against public health recommendations, asymptomatic healthcare workers who have a positive test result for COVID-19 should NOT go to work.

The healthcare worker should monitor their health at home for COVID-19 like illness for a total of seven days from the date of specimen collection. If the healthcare worker remains symptom free, they may return to work after that seven-day period. If the healthcare worker develops COVID-19 like illness during the self-monitoring period, they will need to self-isolate for an additional seven days from symptom onset or until they have been afebrile for 72 hours off antipyretics, whichever is longer, before they return to work.

Note: your employer may require you to report your temperature and symptoms daily (i.e., active monitoring) and may have additional guidance for specific employees caring for high-risk populations such as the elderly or immune compromised.

Support for healthcare workers experiencing anxiety
During the monitoring period, it is normal for you and family members to feel distressed, anxious or afraid. Try to keep a hopeful outlook and strengthen your resilience by drawing on your skills that have helped you manage difficult situations in the past. Keep in touch with other relatives and friends by phone, email or social media. If you feel overwhelmed and need support to cope with the situation, contact the SAMHSA Disaster Distress Hotline at 800-985-5990.