



# Coronavirus (COVID-19) FAQs for Employees

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## Face Coverings/Masks (UPDATED)

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### Are we required to wear masks?

Masks and social distancing are not mandated in County government buildings. Employees are expected to continue following the [CDC guidelines for pandemic safety](#). Please be respectful of other people's mask and social distancing preferences. **The CDC recommends (not required) that all individuals — including those who are fully vaccinated — wear a face covering in public indoor settings in areas of high transmission.** The County is electing to provide staff with N95 masks, based on availability, to ensure the highest level of protection. If interested, please see your supervisor for a mask supply if needed.

## Vaccines

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### Where can I get vaccinated?

**Get vaccinated if you haven't already.** Many options and locations are available. Be sure to stay up-to-date on COVID-19 vaccines by checking Pinellas County's [COVID-19 Vaccine Information web page](#) for vaccination site locations, how to get an appointment and FAQs.

### Will County employees be required to get a COVID-19 vaccine?

No. The County will not require employees to get vaccines.

### Are vaccines free for County employees?

Yes. Cigna waives cost sharing (copays, coinsurance, and deductible) for COVID-19 diagnostic testing and vaccines.

### Do I have to use annual leave to get the COVID-19 vaccines during work hours? What if I don't have any leave time? Is administrative leave available?

If you cannot get a vaccine appointment outside of work hours and need to take time off, follow the usual process to request time off for a regular medical appointment.

### Do I need to notify my supervisor if/when I get vaccinated?

No, you do not.

**What happens if I experience side effects from the COVID-19 vaccine? Do I have to use annual leave? What if I don't have any?**

Yes, you would use your annual leave as you would with any other illness. If you do not have any annual leave to use, discuss your options with your supervisor.

- *Administrative leave with pay* – See [Personnel Rule 4](#) which permits Appointing Authorities the ability to grant administrative leave with pay if such leave is in the best interests of the organization.
- *Leave without pay* - See [Personnel Rule 4](#) which permits the option of leave without pay after all forms of accumulated or gained leave have been exhausted (with noted exceptions).

**I've been working remotely. If I'm fully vaccinated, will I be required to return to the office?**

Speak with your supervisor to learn what the arrangements are for your department.

**Will I still need to wear a mask at work and/or follow social distancing guidelines if I am fully vaccinated?**

You should follow [CDC guidelines for pandemic safety](#).

**Do I need to provide documentation/evidence to prove my leave time was used to receive a COVID-19 vaccine?**

Work with your supervisor to see what is needed.

## Testing

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**Where can I get tested for COVID-19?**

Visit the [Pinellas County Testing web page](#). Employees should call the site of their choice beforehand to determine what is required. Get information on the [different types of tests](#) from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

**Am I eligible for free COVID-19 testing?**

Yes. If you are enrolled in a County medical plan, the test will be covered at no cost to you. Employees should take their Cigna card with them. Cigna will cover testing at 100% even if you don't have a prescription. Some locations do not require proof of insurance. Check before you go. If you go through your doctor, health care professional, or urgent care clinic and get charged for the test, you need to file a claim for reimbursement through [MyCigna.com](#).

**Is the COVID-19 antibody test covered under our medical plan?**

Yes - it is covered as long as it is an FDA-authorized COVID-19 test. Please note that antibody tests should not be used to diagnose someone as being currently sick with COVID-19.

**Are there self-testing options available?**

If you need to be tested for COVID-19 and can't get tested by a healthcare provider, you can consider using either a **self-collection kit** or a **self-test** that can be performed at home or anywhere else. Sometimes a self-test is also called a "home test" or an "at-home test." The FDA provides information on [which self-tests are authorized for use](#). See the [CDC's information on self-testing](#).

**Am I eligible for free COVID-19 self-testing?**

Cigna will reimburse members for costs related to FDA Emergency Use Authorized at-home or retail tests ordered by appropriate care providers. Members who purchase a test can submit a request for reimbursement through [MyCigna.com](#).

**Do I have to stay at home/self-isolate after having the test but before I get the results?**

Follow recommended [CDC quarantine guidelines](#). Speak to your supervisor and stay home/self-isolate, if needed.

## Exposure/Illness (UPDATED)

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### What if I test positive for COVID-19?

Regardless of vaccination status, you should:

- Isolate (stay home) for 5 days
- If you have no symptoms, or your symptoms are improving after 5 days, you can leave your house and continue to wear a mask around others for 5 additional days.
- If you have a fever, continue to stay home until your fever resolves.

### What if I experience symptoms of COVID-19?

Regardless of vaccination status, you should:

- Immediately quarantine at home until a negative test confirms symptoms are not attributable to COVID-19.
- [Testing](#) is encouraged. If testing does not occur, you can be around others after the following conditions have been met:
  - 5 days since symptoms first appeared, or since testing positive if asymptomatic, **and**
  - Other symptoms of COVID-19 are improving, **and**
  - Wear a [well-fitting mask](#) around others for 5 additional days.

### What if I was exposed to someone with COVID-19?

#### SCENARIO 1: No Quarantine

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If you have been boosted **OR** completed the primary series of Pfizer or Moderna vaccine within the last 6 months, **OR** completed the primary series of J&J vaccine within the last 2 months

- Wear a mask around others for 10 days.
- Test on day 5, if possible.

If you develop symptoms, get a test and stay home.

#### SCENARIO 2: Quarantine if Possible

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If you completed the primary series of Pfizer or Moderna vaccine over 6 months ago and are not boosted **OR** completed the primary series of J&J over 2 months ago and are not boosted **OR** are unvaccinated

- Stay home for 5 days. After that continue to wear a mask around others for 5 additional days.
- If they can't quarantine, they must wear a mask for 10 days.
- Test on day 5 if possible.

If you develop symptoms, get a test and stay home.

### I think I might have COVID-19. What should I do?

Stay up-to-date with [symptoms](#) associated with COVID-19. If you develop symptoms such as fever, a cough, difficulty breathing, or other symptoms recognized by the CDC, consult with a healthcare provider who can determine if you need to be tested. Here are your options:

- Contact Cigna's NurseLine 24/7 by calling (800) 862-3557, option 8.
- Talk with a Virtual Visit doctor by phone or video 24/7 at MDLive by calling (800) 862-3557, option 5.
- Call your doctor or the Florida Department of Health (FDOH) hotline to discuss your situation and obtain medical advice. The FDOH COVID-19 Call Center is available 24/7 at (866) 779-6121 or email [COVID19@flhealth.gov](mailto:COVID19@flhealth.gov).
- Get tested. Visit the Pinellas County testing web page at <https://covid19.pinellascounty.org/testing>.
- If you have symptoms of COVID-19 and choose to not get tested, it is important to stay home. Find out [what to do if you are sick](#).

## What happens if I have been exposed to another person who is asymptomatic but was in close contact with someone else is infected with COVID-19?

You are then considered a “contact of a contact” and do not need to quarantine. You should monitor for symptoms and continue to practice prevention strategies in accordance with CDC recommendations.

## Symptoms at Work

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### What if I begin to feel sick at work?

You should:

- Speak immediately with your supervisor or manager in a safe, quiet area, or on the telephone about the situation. To maintain a level of calmness and allow correct course of action, employees are discouraged from making announcements of a possible infection to large groups of employees.
- Avoid others while still onsite.
- Follow your supervisor or management’s direction about leaving the worksite.
- Do not report to work when sick and follow established call-out procedures.
- Call your healthcare provider or the Florida Department of Health (FDOH) hotline to discuss your situation and obtain medical advice. The FDOH COVID-19 Call Center is available 24/7 at (866) 779-6121 or by [email](#).
- Follow appropriate healthcare provider directions.
- Stay away from others and practice social distancing and good personal hygiene in accordance with current recommendations (<https://floridahealthcovid19.gov>) and your healthcare provider’s instructions.
- **If you need to get tested** for COVID-19, Cigna will waive cost sharing (copays, coinsurance, and deductible) for COVID-19 diagnostic [testing](#).

### What if I’ve heard that another employee may be sick with COVID-19?

If you have information about a possible infection, please **share the information privately with management only** so that proper steps can be taken and to avoid causing anxiety among other staff.

## Absence and Leave

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### Will my absence due to COVID-19 or flu-like symptoms or illness be considered unscheduled?

No. As has been the practice during times of increased flu activity, leave taken for flu and flu-like illness is considered scheduled leave. **If you do not feel well, you should not come to work.** Absences due to suspected COVID-19 symptoms should be treated in this same way. Please discuss absences and how to code your time sheet with your supervisor.

### Will my supervisor require a doctor’s note to take leave?

No. In accordance with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), doctor’s notes will not be required from employees to take leave for flu and flu-like illnesses (including COVID-19). The same applies if an employee stays at home to take care of a household family member who is experiencing COVID-19 or flu-like symptoms or illness. A doctor’s note for return to work after COVID-19 illness may be required. Check with your supervisor.

### Will employees who have been out sick related to COVID-19 – whether or not they have been tested – be required to provide proof of medical clearance to return to work?

In an effort to safeguard the health and well-being of co-workers and customers, proof of a negative test or doctor’s note to return to work after COVID-19-related illness may be required. Check with your supervisor and submit any required documentation to your supervisor.

### What are my options for paid and unpaid leave?

- *Paid leave* including annual leave, floating holidays and personal days.
- *A Friend in Need (AFIN)* – See [Policy #12](#). This is a voluntary program through which an eligible employee may choose to assist eligible fellow employees in times of need by permitting person-to-person leave donation as defined within the policy. NOTE: A Friend in Need Program is available for an employee who is sick or needs to

care for a sick family member but NOT to an employee who needs to take care of well children due to school being closed.

- *Administrative leave with pay* – See [Personnel Rule 4](#) which provides Appointing Authorities the ability to grant administrative leave with pay if such leave is in the best interests of the organization.
- *Leave without pay* - See [Personnel Rule 4](#) which provides the option of leave without pay after all forms of accumulated or gained leave have been exhausted (with noted exceptions).

## Short Term Disability

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### **Are employees eligible for Short Term Disability (STD) benefits related to COVID-19?**

The County's short term disability benefits (STD) are administered by UnitedHealthcare. Individuals whose claim is solely due to being placed in quarantine or isolation will not be eligible for STD benefits as they would not meet the policy's Definition of Disability. If the individual has a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19 or other evidence of disability, she/he may be eligible, depending on the specific facts of the claim. For more info, contact UnitedHealthcare at (866) 556-8298 from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. M-F, or email [FPCustomerSupport@UHC.com](mailto:FPCustomerSupport@UHC.com).

Reminder: FMLA is unpaid leave meant to care for employees or their immediate family member for a covered illness, while *STD paid leave covers only the employee* due to illness or disability. If an employee is out caring for a sick child, spouse, or parent, they can apply for FMLA, but will need to use their accrued leave in order to be paid. UnitedHealthcare will make the determination of whether their situation should be covered.

[A Friend in Need Program](#) could potentially assist, if they meet the criteria, have no paid leave and have been denied Short Term Disability.

### **Does a diagnosis of COVID-19 qualify an employee for STD benefits?**

Such individuals will retain coverage under the Short Term Disability policy for the duration of quarantine, and UnitedHealthcare will evaluate any claim for disability benefits individually.

## Well-Being Resources

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### **What well-being resources are available?**

Emotional well-being resources are offered through the [Employee Assistance Program](#) and the [Wellness Program](#). Contact the Wellness team for more information at (727) 464-4049 or email [wellness@pinellascounty.org](mailto:wellness@pinellascounty.org).

## Telecommuting

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### **What are the rules about telecommuting/remote work?**

Appointing Authorities that want to allow, or require, telecommuting will communicate options and expectations for those arrangements. View the [BTS Remote Workforce Guide](#) (in SharePoint).

## Travel

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### **Is work-related travel canceled?**

Management can require or excuse work-related travel (i.e. employees scheduled to fly to a conference) at their discretion, as authorized by their Appointing Authority. Follow the latest [CDC travel recommendations](#) for domestic and international travel.

### **If I am planning to travel for vacation, are there special procedures in place that should be followed prior to and/or upon return?**

Speak with your supervisor about your plans. Follow the latest [CDC travel recommendations](#) for domestic and international travel.

## Safety Measures

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### **What if my supervisor tells me to return to the office but I don't feel comfortable returning?**

Please discuss your specific concerns with your supervisor and ask about resources and options that may be available to address your concerns.

### **Will sneeze/cough guards be installed?**

Sneeze/cough guards have been installed in high traffic areas where appropriate.

### **Will meetings still be held virtually or in person?**

[CDC guidelines for pandemic safety](#) should be followed.

## Cleaning Protocols

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### **What is the County doing to clean common areas?**

Facilities is committed to frequent and enhanced cleaning of all work and common gathering areas. The cleaning crews will regularly clean high-touch surfaces in common areas including doorknobs, light switches, shared equipment, elevator buttons, sink, faucets, etc. Please evaluate your work area and determine if there are additional cleaning and/or safety precautions needed; discuss these concerns with your supervisor.

### **What are additional cleaning protocols during COVID-19?**

Enhanced cleaning protocols include increased nightly cleaning of all buildings and instituting repeated daily cleaning of horizontal surfaces and high touch areas. These enhancements will continue indefinitely.

### **What about the air quality of the buildings?**

Facilities is employing several tactics to provide optimal indoor air quality, including increasing outside air into the buildings, utilizing approved disinfectants on air handlers, and progressively installing ultraviolet lights in air handlers as an added disinfectant protocol.

### **What about hand sanitization stations?**

Hand sanitizers (at least 60% alcohol) are provided for common areas to be used by employees and customers and will be continually replenished.

### **What cleaning is expected from employees?**

Cleaning supplies, based on supply and inventory, are available, and employees are encouraged to clean and disinfect their workspaces and meeting areas as needed. Be sure to follow all manufacturer guidelines for their use.

## Prevention

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### **What protective strategies should I continue using?**

Preventative measures, such as staying home when sick, practicing good personal hygiene, following [CDC guidelines for pandemic safety](#), staying updated on the latest recommendations, and remaining calm while diligent offer some of the best ways to protect yourself and others at work and at home. View [www.pinellascounty.org/hr/coronavirus](http://www.pinellascounty.org/hr/coronavirus) for up-to-date information and resources.