

SBAR Discontinuation of COVID Isolation and Retesting

S: Updated guidance for removal from COVID isolation and retesting.

B: The SARS-CoV-2 PCR assay identifies genetic material of the virus. Persons with COVID-19, even in the absence of symptoms, may continue to test positive by PCR for many weeks as the PCR may identify non-viable fragments of the virus. A person who tests positive by PCR can be contagious early in their illness, though the duration of infectious viral shedding is generally limited.

A: To date, published studies have shown that the presence of viable SARS-CoV-2 virus in respiratory secretions appears to be limited to a period of less than 10 days after the onset of symptoms for persons with mild/moderate illness and to less than 20 days in persons with severe COVID or select immunocompromising conditions. While PCR testing may be positive for weeks after the onset of illness, this is not thought to reflect active viral shedding or the patient being contagious.

R:

1. For patients with a laboratory diagnosis of COVID, **retesting** for SARS-CoV2/COVID by PCR for clearance for a procedure is **NOT recommended for a period of 90 days after their diagnosis of COVID**. After removal from COVID isolation, patients may have their procedure without the need for COVID testing during this 90 day period.
2. Use of a time and symptom based strategy is preferred to guide duration of COVID Isolation. **Isolation can be discontinued 10 days after symptom onset and with at least 1 day of clinical improvement without fever off anti-pyretics in most cases and 20 days after onset of symptoms in severe (required admission to ICU or step-down unit) or selected immunocompromised cases**. Patients with select severely immunocompromising conditions will require retesting to remove isolation. For all patients, please contact Infection Prevention to confirm appropriateness to discontinue isolation and remove banner.
3. **Once patients are cleared from isolation, they should be treated as COVID negative** for a procedure (i.e., do not require respirator and eye protection unless aerosol generating procedure) and admission to the hospital **and NOT be retested until greater than 90 days has lapsed from their initial test**. If tested and positive within this 90 days window, they should not be considered contagious if they meet the criteria for discontinuation of isolation.
4. Retesting within the 90 day window may be considered for a very select group of patients as outline in the policy or for patients who develop new COVID like symptoms.