



MONTANA STATE GOVERNMENT

UPDATED COVID-19 GUIDANCE

The Gianforte administration is committed to providing a safe and productive work environment. The administration continues to monitor workplace operations and remains flexible in addressing issues as they arise. Agency management and individual employees are asked to continue working together to meet operational needs and to serve the citizens of Montana.

Please note: *Some of the requirements in this document may not apply to all employees, such as employees working at the men's and women's prisons, other correctional facilities, the Vets' Home, the State Hospital, other DPHHS facilities, and employees working in some occupations that have close contact with citizens, such as social workers and probation and parole officers. Employees working in these facilities or occupations should follow direction provided by their agencies' management.*

VACCINATIONS

The Gianforte administration strongly recommends employees receive a COVID-19 vaccine. COVID-19 vaccines greatly reduce the risk of serious illness or death and protect the people around you.

The best way to be protected from COVID-19 is to receive one of the safe and effective vaccines available now. COVID-19 vaccines were evaluated in tens of thousands of participants in clinical trials. The vaccines meet the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) rigorous scientific standards for safety, effectiveness, and manufacturing quality needed to support emergency-use authorization.

COVID-19 vaccines are available at local pharmacies, medical facilities, health departments, Montana Health Centers, and providers' offices. To make an appointment for a COVID-19 vaccine at a Montana Health Center, call 855-200-6822.

The State of Montana Benefit Plan (State Plan) provides coverage for the vaccine without cost to members. If you have questions about vaccine coverage, contact Health Care & Benefits Division at (800) 287-8266 or benefitsquestions@mt.gov.

CDC COVID-19 GUIDANCE

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provides current guidance for individuals who may have been exposed to COVID-19 virus and variants and who are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms. Follow this link to access the current CDC COVID-19 guidance: [Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\) | CDC](#).

The information below provides current guidance for symptoms of COVID-19, COVID-19 testing, and what to do if you've been exposed to COVID-19.

- **[COVID-19 Symptoms](#):** People with COVID-19 have had a wide range of symptoms reported – ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness. Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. Anyone can have mild to severe symptoms.

Possible symptoms include:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

This list does not include all possible symptoms. Symptoms may change with new COVID-19 variants and can vary depending on vaccination status. Check the CDC website for updated symptoms.

- **Testing for COVID-19:** Key times to get tested for COVID-19 are listed below.
 - If you have symptoms, test immediately.
 - If you were exposed to COVID-19 and do not have symptoms, wait at least 5 full days after your exposure before testing. If you test too early, you may be more likely to get an inaccurate result.
- **Testing positive for COVID-19:**
 - Regardless of vaccination status, you should isolate from others when you have COVID-19.
 - You should also isolate if you are sick and suspect that you have COVID-19 but do not yet have test results.
 - If you test positive for COVID-19, stay home for at least 5 days and isolate from others in your home.
 - End isolation based on how serious your COVID-19 symptoms were:
 - If you had no symptoms, you may end isolation after day 5.
 - If you had symptoms and your symptoms are improving, you may end isolation after day 5 if you are fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication.
 - If you had symptoms and your symptoms are not improving, continue to isolate until you are fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication and your symptoms are improving.

COVID-19 TESTING

Under the State Plan, no-cost COVID-19 testing is available at medical provider offices and the Montana Health Centers.

You can make an appointment online or via phone (855-200-6822) at a [Montana Health Center](#) for a COVID-19 test.

You may order and have available free at-home COVID-19 tests via the pharmacy benefit through this link: [At-Home COVID-19 Tests \(mt.gov\)](#). Please note that at-home COVID-19 tests do have an expiration date. You may order additional COVID-19 tests as the expiration date nears.

You may contact your local health department for assistance with finding a local COVID-19 testing location.

State agencies are no longer offering COVID-19 testing for employees.

FACE MASKS

Employees may choose to wear face masks at work, but face masks are not required.

Employees working at certain agencies may still be required to wear face masks because of the nature of their work; specifically, employees working at the men's and women's prisons, other correctional facilities, the Vets' Home, the State Hospital, and other DPHHS facilities. This may also apply to employees working in some occupations that have close contact with citizens, such as social workers and probation and parole officers. Employees working in these facilities or occupations should follow direction provided by their agencies' management.

HIGHER-RISK EMPLOYEES

Employees who have concerns about underlying health conditions and COVID-19 risk should discuss their concerns with their healthcare providers and work with their agency HR staff to address concerns. If applicable, managers and human resources staff should ensure the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) interactive process is followed.

TELEWORK

Telework agreements have been implemented following the Remote and Office Workspace Study (ROWS) evaluation of telework eligibility by occupation. Telework eligibility provides flexibility for individuals with approved telework agreements to work remotely if an individual is a COVID-19 close contact or if an individual tests positive for COVID-19. If you have questions about your telework eligibility status, please ask your manager or your human resources staff.

COVID-RELATED LEAVE TIME

All COVID-specific paid leave options have expired and are no longer available to employees.

Employees who need to be away from the work environment because of COVID-related illness or close contact may use sick leave, annual (vacation) leave, comp time, or unpaid leave for which they meet the eligibility requirements. Employees with approved telework agreements may be able to work remotely during the time periods outlined below regarding a COVID-related illness or being a close contact.

SELF-SCREENING

Employees should self-screen for COVID-related illness using this [symptom checklist](#). If an employee selects yes for any of the questions on the checklist, the employee should not go to the worksite. Instead, the employee should contact the employee's supervisor and stay home.

Employees experiencing symptoms should contact their healthcare providers for further guidance. Additional information can be found at [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov).

Agency managers can send employees home if they are exhibiting signs of illness while at work.

Employees may use available leave, such as sick leave, accrued comp time, annual leave, or unpaid leave.