

# With Delta variant, “summer cold” could be COVID

While the State of Emergency declaration in Delaware ended on July 13, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are not over. The infection rate for the COVID-19 “delta” variant is skyrocketing - mostly among the unvaccinated population across the country. Even fully vaccinated individuals have experienced “breakthrough” infections, which tend to be milder, but it can be contagious and spread to others.

Everyone knows “summer colds” and allergies are not that unusual in Delaware but this year it may be a symptom of the COVID-19 virus.

Check out the status of COVID-19 infections in Kent County by clicking this link:

<https://myhealthycommunity.dhss.delaware.gov/locations/county-kent>

According to the CDC, people infected with the Delta variant first report a headache or feeling fatigued/out of sorts. While others experience the well-known flu-like symptoms of cough, sore throat, fever, breathing issues, body aches, nausea, loss of taste or smell, congestion, etc. Some infected with the Delta variant or COVID report no symptoms at all.

Kent County employees feeling the effects of a summer cold or any flu like symptom – even fully vaccinated staff should respond as if it could be COVID 19 by promptly informing your supervisor and the Personnel Office, and getting a COVID-19 test. Do not report to work until a negative test result is received.

## ALLERGIES, COLD, FLU AND COVID-19 Most common symptoms for each

SYMPTOMS	Allergies	Cold	Flu	COVID-19
Body aches		✓		sometimes
Chills		rarely	✓	sometimes
Dry cough	✓	✓	✓	✓
Fatigue	sometimes	✓	✓	✓
Fever		rarely	✓	✓
Headache	✓	rarely	✓	sometimes
Itchy eyes	✓			
Loss of taste/smell	sometimes	rarely	sometimes	✓
Nasal congestion	✓	✓	✓	rarely
Nausea/vomiting/diarrhea		sometimes	sometimes	sometimes
Runny nose	✓	✓	✓	rarely
Sneezing	✓	✓	✓	sometimes
Sore throat	sometimes	✓	✓	sometimes
Shortness of breath	sometimes	rarely	✓	✓

It is as important as ever to get vaccinated against COVID and continue to exercise preventive measures.

Kent County continues to encourage all employees to wear a face covering when unable to maintain social distancing (3 feet of separation), in public areas like restrooms & hallways, or gathered in large groups without separation. Employees should continue to regularly wash hands for at least 20 seconds with warm water, use hand sanitizer, avoid touching the face, etc. Please continue to be aware and avoid exposing the unvaccinated, young children, or immune compromised to COVID or the Delta variant.

Remember, whether UNVACCINATED or VACCINATED, employees MAY NOT REPORT FOR WORK if you answer “YES” to any of these questions:

- *Are you presently ill?*
- *Have you had any COVID-like illness in the past 14 days, to include Fever, Coughing, Shortness of Breath, or other Flu like Symptoms?*
- *Have you been instructed by a healthcare professional to self-quarantine?*
- *Have you been in contact with anyone who has tested positive for COVID-19?*

If you answer “YES” to any of the above questions,

- Promptly get a COVID-19 test. Promptly means that day or the next day at the latest.
- Promptly contact your Supervisor/Department Head & Personnel Director.
- Do not return to work until you get a negative test result.
- If positive, do not return to work until cleared by DPH or medical professional, promptly contact your Supervisor/Department Head & Personnel Director.
- Submit a copy of the test results to the Personnel Office.

If you are unsure if you have been in “close contact” with a COVID-19 positive person or someone that may be experiencing symptoms or you are unsure of your particular situation, you should contact your Department Head and/or Personnel Director. You will be asked a series of questions and instructed to get tested.

Even without the indoor mask mandate for everyone, employees must continue to immediately report COVID-19 symptoms, potential exposures, and close contact with symptomatic persons or those testing positive to their department head and the Personnel Director.

Employees absent from work for a COVID-19 related reason such as symptoms; positive test; exposure or close contact to someone testing positive, with symptoms, or in close contact with another such person; screening question failure; Division of Public

Health directive; quarantine/isolation order; school or childcare issues related to COVID-19; etc. must use accrued sick leave.

Employees directed to remain home should not return to the workplace for any reason until authorized/directed to do so. Employees are responsible for maintaining regular contact with their Department Head or appropriate supervisor during COVID related isolation or quarantine and after the initial call, update the Personnel Director if health conditions change. Each exposure is assessed individually based upon the specific information provided by the employee and DPH guidance.

Free COVID-19 vaccine is widely available at local pharmacies. Free COVID-19 testing at pop-up testing sites is also still widely available.

Employees with questions regarding COVID-19 testing should consult the Division of Public Health website: <https://coronavirus.delaware.gov>

Remember, if you are **UNVACCINATED**, you are encouraged to continue to wear a face covering at all times at work and away from work. **Vaccinated** Kent County employees are encouraged to wear a face covering whenever moving about in public accessed areas (restrooms, hallways, etc.) or in a group setting if unable to maintain 3-feet of distance/plexiglass separation.

Visitors are not required to wear a mask, but visitors unvaccinated against the coronavirus are strongly encouraged to wear a mask. No proof of vaccination is required of anyone. The honor system should be observed in order to protect others.

Specific to urgent care centers, if a DVHT member presents with symptoms and is seen by a physician and the claim is coded as being physician ordered, the test would be covered. If the member visits the urgent care center and requests a test without the physician consultation, it would not be covered. Be sure to ask the urgent care center if COVID-19 testing is free of charge, as it may not be covered.

***Please stay safe & healthy!***

*(posted 07/21/21)*