

# Precautions After COVID-19 Illness

While some viral infections, such as chickenpox, result in lifelong immunity, the same is not true of coronaviruses like SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19.) Just as you can catch the common cold repeatedly, scientists currently believe that it is possible to become reinfected with COVID-19 after one has recovered from it. Individuals who have had COVID-19 should therefore never assume they are immune and must remain vigilant about health measures and physical distancing so long as the pandemic persists.

## Overview

Individuals in the URI community who contract COVID-19, even if asymptomatic, must follow precautions to prevent reinfection and/or spreading the virus to others. The following requirements reflect current guidance from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Rhode Island Department of Health.

## Definitions

**Accepted vaccine.** Any vaccine that was authorized for use in the United States at the time of administration.

**Fully vaccinated.** Someone who has received all recommended doses of an accepted COVID-19 vaccine and more than 14 days have passed since receipt of the final dose.

## Isolation While Ill

Individuals who contract COVID-19, whether symptomatic or not, must complete a period of isolation in accordance with URI's [Isolation and Quarantine](#) requirements. For most patients, the isolation period is 10 days from the onset of symptoms or a positive test result, whichever came first.

**At the end of the isolation period, the person is no longer considered contagious as long as they are fever-free (without fever-reducing medications) and their symptoms have improved. They may return to work/school and resume other daily activities unless told otherwise by their healthcare provider.** Note that some symptoms of COVID-19 can, and often do, persist for weeks, but this does not mean the patient has an active COVID-19 infection or that they can infect others.

## Preventive Measures

**A person who has recovered from COVID-19 cannot be assumed to have full, lasting immunity against reinfection. They remain at risk of reinfection and of passing the virus on to others.** Individuals who've recovered from COVID-19 must continue to follow all the same precautions observed by those who have not yet had COVID-19 including use of face coverings, good hand hygiene, and maintaining physical distance, unless otherwise exempt by virtue of being fully vaccinated. **All members of the URI community are expected to follow these measures consistently.**

Those who have recovered from COVID-19 must also still comply with URI's [requirements for daily Self-Screening](#) if coming to campus. Students, faculty, and staff must not come to campus if they are ill, even if they've previously had COVID-19, and should contact their healthcare provider right away.

## Testing

Individuals who've had COVID-19 may continue to return a positive test result for up to 90 days, even if they no longer have an active infection. This is because the test has difficulty distinguishing between active viral particles during infection and inactive ones being shed during recovery. The Rhode Island Department of Health therefore recommends that individuals who've recovered from COVID-19 not be tested again within this 90-day timeframe as the results are unreliable. Accordingly, **a negative test result should not be required for a person to return to work or school following COVID-19 illness.** Note that routine surveillance testing is no longer required for individuals who have been fully vaccinated. See [Vaccination](#) for additional details.

## Vaccination

Because infection with COVID-19 is not believed to provide full immunity, **those who have already had COVID-19 should still be vaccinated against it as soon as possible.** Based on clinical trials, the vaccine is believed to convey longer lasting immunity to COVID-19 than an actual infection.

## Exceptions

The normal isolation and recovery period for most individuals may not apply to those who are immunocompromised or become seriously ill. In all such cases, the patient must follow the advice of their healthcare provider.