

Guidance for Close Contacts of a Person Confirmed to have COVID-19: Quarantine and Testing

This guidance is for close contacts of a person who has tested positive for COVID-19. Follow these instructions for quarantine and testing to help prevent the spread of the virus in the community.

Definitions:

Close contact: Someone who was within 6 feet of a person who tested positive for COVID-19 for a cumulative 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period, while that person was infectious.

- Exception to close contact definition in **schools**:
 - In the school (Pre-K-12th grade and Adult Education) indoor classroom setting, the close contact definition excludes students who were within 3 to 6 feet of an infected fellow student if:
 - Both students were engaged in consistent and correct use of well-fitting face masks the entire time
AND
 - other layered prevention strategies were in place (such as universal mask wearing in the school regardless of vaccination status, physical distancing, and good ventilation)
 - This exception cannot be applied if students consumed meals, snacks, or drinks, or napped within 6 feet of one another in the classroom (since masks have been removed). It also does not apply to interactions between students and staff.
 - For more information, see *Guidance for Schools* at coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance.

Immunocompromised: someone who has a weakened immune system due to a medical condition or from taking medications that suppress the immune system. This includes but is not limited to: people on chemotherapy, people with blood cancers like leukemia, people who have had an organ transplants or stem cell transplant, and people on dialysis.

Infectious period: The time period during which someone is able to spread an infection to others. The infectious period for COVID-19 starts two days before symptom onset and typically ends 10 days after symptom onset (or test date for people who don't have symptoms).

Incubation period: The time period between when someone is exposed to an infectious agent and when the first symptoms may appear. The incubation period for COVID-19 can be as little as 2 days and as long as 14 days.

Fully vaccinated: A person is considered fully vaccinated 14 days after they complete a **primary** COVID-19 vaccine series (after the second dose of a 2-dose series, or after one dose of a single-dose vaccine¹). The **primary series** is the standard vaccine course before any extra (e.g., "booster") doses.

Symptoms of COVID-19: may include fever (subjective or 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit), 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, or diarrhea.

Quarantine

Quarantine is the process of separating individuals who have been exposed to an infectious agent

¹ Day an individual completed the primary vaccine series=Day 0

(like COVID-19) before they develop symptoms of infection or test positive for infection, for the duration of time that covers the incubation period for the pathogen. Quarantine is a powerful tool for preventing the spread of COVID-19.

- **If you are required to quarantine**, you should
 - Stay at home for your full quarantine period (except to get testing and medical care).
 - Do not participate in public activities or gatherings (e.g., grocery shopping, places of worship, parties, etc.).
 - Do not leave home to go to work or school.
 - Work from home (telework) or utilize sick leave if possible.
 - If you are a student, make alternate arrangements to obtain class materials.
 - Stay away from the people you live with as much as possible during the quarantine period.
 - Avoid non-essential visitors to your home.
- **If someone in your household has tested positive for COVID-19, you have special quarantine and testing instructions to follow.** For details, please see *Guidance for People who Test Positive for COVID-19 and their Household Members* at coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance.

People who have been identified as a close contact of a person with COVID-19 are NOT required to quarantine or be restricted from work if:

- They have had COVID-19 (symptomatic or asymptomatic) within the last 90 days AND do not have any symptoms suggestive of COVID-19 infection.
OR
- They are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 AND do not have any symptoms suggestive of COVID-19 infection.
 - Fully vaccinated people who are exposed to COVID-19 **should still:**
 - Get a COVID-19 test 5 to 7 days after the date they were exposed. (See **Getting tested** section below)
 - Consider wearing a mask at home for 14 days if they live with someone who is:
 - at higher risk for severe COVID-19² who is not fully vaccinated
OR
 - immunocompromised (regardless of vaccination status)
 - For more information, see information on *Guidance for Fully Vaccinated People* at coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance
- **NOTE:** People who are not required to quarantine should still self-monitor for symptoms for 14 days after the date of their exposure. If symptoms of COVID-19 develop during this time period, they should isolate immediately and should follow-up with their healthcare provider for testing (or to discuss repeat testing).

All other close contacts who do not meet the quarantine exceptions listed above must begin self-quarantine as soon as they know that they have been exposed

- **Quarantining for 14 days counting from the date of last exposure remains the safest and most effective strategy for decreasing the transmission of COVID-19.** According to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a person who

² For more information see *Guidance for People at Higher Risk for Severe COVID-19* at coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance

completes a full 14-day quarantine has only about a 0.1% of spreading COVID-19 after they leave quarantine. A person who ends quarantine after 10 days without getting a test has about a 1% (range up to 10%) risk, and after 10 days with a negative test about 0.3% risk. If quarantine ends after 7 days with a negative test the risk of transmitting COVID-19 is about 5% (up to 12%).

- **Ending quarantine after 10 days (on day 11) after exposure may be acceptable if:**
 - The exposed person does not develop symptoms of COVID-19 at any point during quarantine.
 - AND**
 - The exposed person self-monitors for symptoms for a full 14 days after the date of last exposure.
 - **NOTE: The 10-day quarantine period option is not permitted in healthcare facilities and congregate settings** (see **Quarantine in special settings** section below)
- **NOTE:** If symptoms of COVID-19 develop at any time in the 14 days after exposure, the exposed person should isolate immediately and follow-up with their healthcare provider for testing (or to discuss repeat testing).

Quarantine in special settings:

PreK-12th Grade, Adult Education, and Institutions of Higher Education (IHE):

- **In the PreK-12th grade, Adult Education, and IHE settings, a 7-day quarantine may be utilized for students and staff provided that:**
 - the exposed person is tested for COVID-19 on **day 5** or later of the quarantine period
 - AND**
 - receives a negative test result
 - AND**
 - does not develop symptoms of COVID-19 at any point during quarantine
 - **If these conditions are met, the person may return to the school/IHE on Day 8.**
 - If no COVID-19 testing is done, the person must quarantine for at least 10 days.
 - The exposed person should self-monitor for symptoms for a full 14 days after the date of last exposure. If symptoms develop at any time in the 14 days after exposure, the exposed person should isolate immediately and follow up with their health care provider for testing (or to discuss repeat testing).
 - For more details, see *Guidance for Schools* at coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance.

Healthcare facility and congregate settings

- **Healthcare facility and congregate setting staff, residents, and patients** (including correctional/detention facilities, homeless shelters, intermediate care facilities, community residence facilities, and supported living facilities) who are exposed to COVID-19 **must adhere to 14 days of quarantine.** (This does not include apartment buildings, condominiums, or cooperatives.)
 - Healthcare facilities may elect to waive the work restriction requirements for healthcare personnel⁴ with exposure to a confirmed COVID-19 case. Detailed information can be found in *Guidance for Healthcare Personnel Monitoring, Restriction, and Return to Work* at coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance.

⁴ **Healthcare personnel** are all paid or unpaid persons serving in healthcare settings who have the potential for direct or indirect exposure to patients or infectious materials.

- **Healthcare facility inpatients and residents who have had close contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case may not waive quarantine requirements regardless of their vaccination status** due to the higher risk of severe disease and death in these populations, and challenges with physical distancing in healthcare settings.

Getting Tested for COVID-19

- Close contacts of a confirmed case of COVID-19:
 - **who are not fully vaccinated and do not have a personal history of COVID-19 in the past 90 days** should get a COVID-19 test immediately⁵ and (if the test is negative) get another test 5 to 7 days after their last exposure date
 - **who are fully vaccinated healthcare personnel or patients or residents in a healthcare facility** should get a COVID-19 test immediately **and** (if the test is negative) get another test 5 to 7 days after their last exposure date
 - **all other people who are fully vaccinated** should get a COVID-19 test 5 to 7 days after their last exposure date
 - Isolate if the test is positive and follow recommendations in *Guidance for People who Test Positive for COVID-19 and their Household Members* at coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance.
- Close contacts who are required to quarantine must stay at home while waiting for their COVID-19 test results and must stay at home -regardless of their test results- for their full required quarantine period.
- You can get tested through your healthcare provider or at a free public testing site, including a self-testing option “Test Yourself DC” at a community facility near you. For more information see coronavirus.dc.gov/testyourself.
- When you go for testing, wear a mask and keep at least 6 feet of distance from other people.
- If your test results are positive for COVID-19, please be aware that the DC Health Contact Trace Team may call you to ask you about your contacts.

Monitor Yourself for Symptoms of COVID-19

- Be alert for possible symptoms of COVID-19 for the entire 14-day incubation period.
- If you develop symptoms:
 - Separate yourself from other people and contact your healthcare provider.
 - **If you have a medical emergency**, call 911.
 - Be sure to let your healthcare provider or the 911 dispatcher know that you were exposed to someone who tested positive for COVID-19.
- **Visits to a healthcare facility for any reason should be via medical transport (e.g., ambulance) or private vehicle (not public transportation).** Be sure to call ahead and wear a mask.

The guidelines above will continue to be updated as the outbreak evolves. Please visit coronavirus.dc.gov regularly for the most current information.

⁵ CDC defines “immediately” as no sooner than 48 hours after the exposure occurred