

Guidance After Exposure to a Person Confirmed to have COVID-19: Precautions and Testing

This guidance describes what to do if you are exposed to a person who has tested positive for COVID-19. Follow these instructions to help prevent the spread of the virus in the community.

Definitions:

Asymptomatic infection: When a person has an infection but does not experience any symptoms of the infection (i.e., does not feel sick). Many COVID-19 infections are asymptomatic.

Close contact: Someone who was within 6 feet of a person who tested positive for COVID-19 for cumulative 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period, while that person was infectious. **(This definition is currently only for healthcare settings and congregate settings as described on page 2 of this guidance.)**

Exposure to COVID-19: The definition of exposure currently varies by setting:

- For healthcare and congregate settings: Determining whether a person was exposed to COVID-19 should be based on a comprehensive risk assessment including the “Close Contact” definition listed above.
- For all other community settings (homes, businesses, schools etc.): Determining whether a person was exposed to COVID-19 should take into account factors including time, distance, mask use, ventilation, activities, and severity of symptoms. More information on exposure risk can be found at cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/risks-exposure.html.

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 or stem cell transplant, and people on dialysis.

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.

What to do after exposure

- If you were exposed to COVID-19, begin taking **precautions** immediately, regardless of your vaccination status or history of prior infection. You should:
 - Wear a well-fitting mask or respirator¹ anytime you are around others indoors. Avoid places where you are unable to wear a mask.
 - Avoid being around people who are immunocompromised, unvaccinated, not up to date with their COVID-19 vaccine, or at high risk for severe COVID-19.
 - For more information, see *People with Certain Medical Conditions* at cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-with-medical-conditions.html.
 - Monitor yourself for symptoms of COVID-19.
 - If you develop symptoms:
 - Isolate immediately.
 - Get tested.
 - Stay home until you know your results.

¹ For the rest of this guidance, the term mask will be used to refer to either masks *or* respirators. For more information about masks and respirators, see cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/masks.html.

- If you test is positive, isolate and follow instructions in *Guidance for Isolation: People who Test Positive for COVID-19* at coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance.
- **You can still develop COVID-19 up to 10 days after you have been exposed.**
 - **Continue precautions for 10 full days after exposure.**
 - For calculating the duration of precautions, the date of exposure is considered **Day 0**. The first full day after date of exposure is **Day 1**.
 - **People who are unable to wear a mask when around others (including children under 2) should follow the other precautions through day 10 and consider adding additional measures to prevent transmission (e.g., physical distancing).**

People who have been exposed to COVID-19, regardless of their vaccination status, should:

- Get a COVID-19 test **5 full days** (Day 6) after the date they were exposed.
 - **What kind of test to get?**
 - Either an antigen test or a nucleic acid amplification test (NAAT i.e., PCR) test may be used.
 - You should use an antigen test if:
 - ❖ You are symptomatic and tested positive in the last 30 days.
 - ❖ You tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 31-90 days.
 - When using an antigen test, the FDA recommends 2 negative antigen tests for individuals with symptoms or 3 antigen tests for those without symptoms, performed 48 hours apart.
 - ❖ **NOTE:** At any point after a negative antigen test, you may elect to take a single PCR test to complete testing.
 - For more details on serial antigen testing, see the FDA Safety Communication at fda.gov/medical-devices/safety-communications/home-covid-19-antigen-tests-take-steps-reduce-your-risk-false-negative-results-fda-safety
 - Testing is not recommended to detect new infection for asymptomatic people who tested positive in the last 30 days.
 - For more details, see “Choosing a COVID-19 Test” at cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/testing.html#choosing-a-test
 - If the test is positive, isolate and follow instructions in *Guidance for Isolation: People who Test Positive for COVID-19* at coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance.
- Monitor themselves for COVID-19 symptoms for a full 10 days after exposure (Days 0 through 10) and isolate and test if symptoms develop.
- Wear a mask when around other people (including household members) for 10 days after their exposure (through day 10).

Empiric transmission-based precautions in healthcare and congregate settings

- The following does not apply to correctional facilities, homeless shelters or healthcare workers.
 - Correctional facilities and homeless shelters should refer to guidance from the CDC at cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/homeless-correctional-settings.html
 - Healthcare personnel² who have been exposed to COVID-19 must follow *Guidance for Healthcare Personnel Monitoring, Restriction, and Return to Work* at coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance.

² **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.

- Routine use of empiric transmission-based precautions (formerly quarantine) is **no longer required** for asymptomatic patients, residents, and persons supported after a close contact exposure with someone who has COVID-19 (regardless of vaccination status).
 - Close contacts:
 - Should wear well-fitting source control for 10 days after exposure (see page 1). **AND**
 - Get tested immediately (but not earlier than 24 hours after exposure) and, if negative, again 48 hours after the first negative and, if negative, again 48 hours after the second negative. This will typically be at day 1 (where day of exposure is day 0), day 3, and day 5.
 - Either an antigen test or a nucleic acid amplification test (NAAT i.e., PCR) test may be used.
 - Testing is not recommended to detect new infection for asymptomatic people who tested positive in the last 30 days.
 - You should use an antigen test if:
 - ❖ You are symptomatic and tested positive in the last 30 days.
 - ❖ You tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 31-90 days.
- Limited use of empiric transmission-based precautions may still be considered based on the risk profile of the population served, the presence of ongoing COVID-19 transmission within the facility, and the ability for close contacts to follow recommendations for source control and testing.
 - If empiric transmission-based precautions are used:
 - Discontinue precautions after day 7 following exposure (count the day of exposure as day 0) if no symptoms develop **AND** the series of 3 viral tests, as described above, are negative.
 - If viral testing is not performed, discontinue precautions after day 10 following exposure (count the day of exposure as day 0) if no symptoms develop.
 - Facilities considering a more conservative approach to managing close contact exposures are strongly encouraged to consult with DC Health.
 - **DC Health may provide stricter guidance for managing close contact exposures based on outbreak specific recommendations.**
- **Unless instructed differently by DC Health in response to a suspected or confirmed outbreak**, intermediate care facilities (ICF) and community residence facilities (CRF) may choose to allow residents and persons supported to follow guidance for the community after exposure to a person with COVID-19 instead of the health care guidance described in this section.

Getting tested for COVID-19

- For more information about:
 - At-home testing, see cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/testing/self-testing.html
 - Where to get a COVID-19 test in DC, see testinglocator.cdc.gov/.
- If you need to go for in person testing, wear a mask and keep at least 6 feet of distance from other people,
- Isolate if the test is positive and follow recommendations in *Guidance for Isolation: People who Test Positive for COVID-19* at coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance.

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