

Guidance for People who Test Positive for COVID-19 and their Household Members

This guidance provides recommendations for: people who have a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19 who are not sick enough to need hospitalization and are able to recover from COVID-19 at home and for household members of people with confirmed COVID-19.

For people who test positive for COVID-19:

- **ALL** people who test positive for COVID-19 must isolate themselves regardless of whether they have symptoms or whether they are vaccinated.
 - **Exception:** people who have recovered from a confirmed COVID-19 infection within the past 90 days **AND** do not have any symptoms of COVID¹ do not need to isolate. A positive result in this scenario is likely due to prolonged shedding of virus that is not able to cause infection.
 - People with a history of COVID-19 who develop symptoms of COVID-19 again should isolate and follow-up with their healthcare provider to be evaluated for possible reinfection.
- People at home with COVID-19 are encouraged to speak to their healthcare provider about possible treatment with **monoclonal antibodies**.

How to isolate

Take the steps below to isolate yourself from others to prevent the spread of COVID-19 to your friends, family, and community.

- **Stay at home except to get 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. Notify your employer or school that you have been diagnosed with COVID-19 so that they can initiate any necessary actions to limit spread of COVID-19 at your work location.
 - Work from home (telework) or utilize sick leave if possible.
 - If you are a student, make alternate arrangements to obtain class materials.
- **Separate yourself from other people and pets** in your home as much as possible during your isolation period.
 - Avoid physical contact.
 - Use a separate bedroom and bathroom, if available.
 - If you have pets, have someone else take care of them while you are isolating.
- **Do not share personal items** (e.g., dishes, cups, eating utensils, towels, bedding, or electronics like cell phones) with others while you are isolating. After you use these items, they should be cleaned and disinfected as appropriate.
- **Prohibit visitors who do not have an essential need to be in your home.** Especially avoid having visitors who are immunocompromised² or who are not fully vaccinated³.
- **Wear a mask** if you need to be around other people in your home, and if you need to leave your home for medical care. If you are not able to wear a mask (for example, because it causes

¹ **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.

² **Immunocompromised** means having 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 transplant or stem cell transplant, and people on dialysis

³ A person is considered **fully vaccinated** 14 days after completion of a COVID-19 vaccination series (after the second dose of a 2-dose series, or after one dose of a single-dose vaccine).

trouble breathing), then it is essential for people to wear masks if they need to be around you.

- **Cover your coughs and sneezes.** Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw used tissues in a lined trash can and immediately wash your hands.
- **Clean your hands frequently.** Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol, covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry. Soap and water should be used if hands are visibly dirty.

Be prepared for DC Health follow-up

- **Answer the phone** when you get a call from the DC Health Contact Trace Team.
 - Caller ID will say “DC COVID-19 Team” on any phone with any carrier.
 - More information can be found at coronavirus.dc.gov/dccontacttraceforce.
- Be prepared to share information about your activities and close contacts starting 48 hours before your first COVID-19 symptoms appeared. This information will only be used to inform public health action such as contacting those who need to be quarantined to prevent further spread.
- DC Health will follow up with you regularly throughout your isolation period to ask how you are doing, to find out if you are having any trouble isolating yourself, and to identify any resources we can share with you.

Monitor your symptoms

- Consult with your healthcare provider if you have not yet been medically evaluated (i.e., were tested at a free public health site).
 - Reschedule non-essential medical appointments.
 - Call ahead before visiting your doctor and let them know that you have COVID-19.
- Contact your healthcare provider for any symptom that is severe or concerning.
- **Call 911 (or someone with you should call 911) if you are having a medical emergency**, such as trouble breathing, persistent pain or pressure in your chest, pale gray or bluish lips or face, confusion, or loss of consciousness. Let dispatch personnel know that you have COVID-19.
- **Visits to a healthcare facility for any reason should be via medical transport (e.g., ambulance) or private vehicle (not public transportation).**

Stopping home isolation

Home isolation can stop when you are no longer infectious. This is based on how long it has been since your symptoms began, and if they are improving.

- Patients with confirmed COVID-19 should stay at home until:
 - **At least 10 days*** have passed since your symptoms first started
AND
 - At least 24 hours after your fever resolves without medication
AND
 - Your other symptoms have improved
 - **NOTE:** Symptoms of altered taste and smell may last for weeks to months after you recover and do not need to keep you in isolation.
 - If you tested positive but **never had any symptoms**, then wait until at least 10 days have passed since you were tested.
 - Duration of isolation is the same whether or not you are vaccinated.

- **NOTE:** People who have severe COVID-19⁴ or who are immunocompromised² may need to isolate for **up to 20 days** and may require testing to be cleared from isolation. If you fall into either of these categories, consult with your healthcare provider and follow their advice.

For household members of people with COVID-19:

- If you are a household member of a person with COVID-19, you are considered an **exposed close contact**. If you are not fully vaccinated or do not have a personal history of COVID-19 in the past 90 days, you will need to **quarantine**.
- If you are able to remain separated from and avoid close contact with the household member(s) with COVID-19 during their isolation period, follow quarantine and testing instructions detailed in *Guidance for Contacts of a Person Confirmed to have COVID-19: Quarantine and Testing* at coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance.
- If you are not able to remain separated from and avoid close contact with the household member(s) during their isolation period, you are at **higher risk** for contracting COVID-19 because you are being repeatedly exposed to COVID-19 in your household. **You should follow quarantine and testing instructions in the table below:**

IF:	You are fully vaccinated	You are not fully vaccinated	You have a history of COVID-19 in the last 90 days ⁵
You are <u>not</u> able to remain separated from the person with COVID-19 during their isolation period	<p><u>Quarantine:</u> Not necessary⁶</p> <p><u>Test:</u> 5-7 days after you were first exposed <u>and</u> again 5-7 days <u>after</u> the end of the person with COVID-19's isolation period</p>	<p><u>Quarantine:</u> Quarantine throughout the isolation period of the household member with COVID-19 and <u>continue</u> to quarantine for an additional 10-14 days⁶ <u>after</u> the end of the household member's isolation period.</p> <p><u>Test:</u> Immediately⁷ <u>and</u> (if negative) get tested again 5-7 days after the end of the household member with COVID-19's isolation period.</p>	<p><u>Quarantine and Testing:</u> not necessary (provided symptoms do not develop)</p>
Multiple people in your household test positive for COVID-19 on different dates (and you are not able to stay separated from them)	<p><u>Quarantine:</u> Not necessary⁶</p> <p><u>Test:</u> 5-7 days after your <u>initial</u></p>	<p><u>Quarantine:</u> Quarantine throughout the isolation period of the last household member who tested positive for COVID-19, and <u>continue</u> to quarantine for an additional 10-14⁶ days</p>	<p><u>Quarantine and Testing:</u> not necessary (provided symptoms do not develop)</p>

⁴ **Severe COVID-19** means that a person required hospitalization, treatment in an intensive care unit, or a ventilator to help them breathe

⁵ If you had COVID-19 more than 90 days ago, you should follow recommendations for testing and quarantine based on your **vaccination status**.

⁶ For detailed information, see *Guidance for Contacts of a Person Confirmed to have COVID-19: Quarantine and Testing* at coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance.

⁷ CDC defines "immediately" as no sooner than 48 hours after the exposure occurred

	<p>exposure and again 5-7 days <u>after</u> the end of the person with COVID-19's isolation period</p>	<p><u>after</u> that household member's isolation period ends.</p> <p><u>Test:</u> Immediately <u>and</u> (if negative) get tested again 5-7 days after the end of the last household member's isolation period</p>	
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Protect yourself:

- **Limit** contact with the person who tested positive for COVID-19.
 - Try to stay at least 6 feet away from the person with COVID-19 during their isolation period. The person with COVID-19 should stay in a separate room or area of the home if possible and eat their meals in that space as well.
 - If you have to share space, make sure the room has good ventilation by opening windows and doors as much as possible, or turning on a fan.
- **Wear a mask** if you have to be around the person with COVID-19.
- **Avoid** sharing household items with the person with COVID-19 (e.g., kitchenware, towels, bedding, electronics.).
- **Avoid** having visitors while a sick person is isolating and while household members are quarantining. Especially avoid having visitors who are at higher risk for severe COVID-19² or who are not fully vaccinated.
- **Wash** your hands frequently. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

Taking care of a person with COVID-19:

- No more than one person in the household should provide care to the person with COVID-19, to limit exposure of household members to the virus.
- People who are not fully vaccinated or who are immunocompromised should not provide care to people with COVID-19.
- Help them with grocery shopping, filling their prescriptions, and getting other household supplies.
- Take care of their pets and limit contact between pets and the person sick with COVID-19.
- Have their healthcare provider's contact information at hand. Monitor the person with COVID-19 for signs that they are getting sicker and call their healthcare provider if necessary. Signs of a medical emergency include: trouble breathing, persistent chest pain or pressure, pale gray or bluish lips or face, confusion, or inability to wake or stay awake. If they have a medical emergency, call 911, and inform dispatch personnel that the person has COVID-19.
- Make sure you put on a mask before entering the sick person's room and ask them to put their mask on before you enter.
- Wear disposable gloves in the following situations:
 - When there is potential contact with the sick person's blood or other body fluids
 - When handling trash
 - When handling the sick person's dirty laundry
 - When handling the sick person's used kitchenware (e.g., plates, cups, utensils)
- Perform hand hygiene immediately after removing gloves and dispose of gloves in a lined trashcan.
- **Clean and disinfect** frequently touched objects and surfaces in the home at least daily. High touch surfaces include: doorknobs, tables, handles, light switches, phones, remote controls, and countertops. Make sure you clean visible dirt before you disinfect. Wear gloves if needed for the cleaning and disinfecting products used.

- If they feel up to it, the person who is sick can clean their own space. Provide them with personal cleaning supplies such as tissues, paper towels, cleaners, and disinfectant.
- Laundry: the sick person's laundry can be washed together with other people's items. Wash laundry on the warmest permissible setting. Wear a mask as well as gloves when handling the sick person's laundry.
- For more information about cleaning and disinfecting in the home, see [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/cleaning-disinfection.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/cleaning-disinfection.html).

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