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:

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 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

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.

Incubation period: The time period between when someone is exposed to an infectious agent and when the first symptoms of illness may appear. The incubation period for the virus that causes COVID-19 can be as long as 14 days. The median time between exposure and the onset of symptoms is 4-5 days[1] .

Infectious period: The time period when someone with an infection is contagious to others. Recent scientific evidence shows that people with COVID-19, on average, are most contagious in the early part of their infection, from 1-2 days before their symptoms start to 2-3 days after their symptoms start. The average person can remain contagious for a week or more after symptoms appear.

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.

Up to date on COVID-19 vaccine: A person is considered up to date after they have received all recommended doses of the COVID-19 vaccine, including booster doses as applicable.
This includes:
- Unboosted people 12 and older who completed their primary vaccine series[2]:
  - Less than 5 months ago (for the mRNA vaccines: Pfizer or Moderna)
  - Less than 2 months ago (for the J&J vaccine)
- Children age 5 to 11 who have completed a primary vaccine series but are not yet eligible for a booster dose
- For detailed information about staying up to date on your COVID-19 vaccine, see cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/stay-up-to-date.html.

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[1] This means that half the people will have symptoms appear sooner than 4-5 days and half the people will have symptoms appear after more than 4-5 days.
[2] The initial vaccine course before any extra (e.g., "booster") doses

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Quarantine

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

For quarantine calculation purposes the date of exposure is considered **Day 0**. The first full day after date of exposure is **Day 1**.

In general, all people who have been exposed to COVID-19, regardless of their vaccination status should:
- Get a COVID-19 test **5 days** (Day 5) after the date they were exposed[2].
  - **What kind of test to get?**
    - Either an antigen test or a nucleic acid amplification test (NAAT i.e., PCR) test may be used.
  - If the test is positive, isolate and follow instructions in *Guidance for Isolation: People who Test Positive for COVID-19 and Their Household Members* 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 well-fitting mask or respirator[3] when around other people (including household members) for 10 days after their exposure (through day 10).

The following close contacts do not need to quarantine if exposed (provided they do not have symptoms of COVID-19):
- People who are up to date on their COVID-19 vaccine (see definition above)
- People who have had confirmed COVID-19 (symptomatic or asymptomatic) within the last 90 days with recovery
- People participating in a school Test to Stay program[4]

The following close contacts should quarantine if exposed:
- Unvaccinated people (including children under 5 who are not yet eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine)
- People who are not up to date on their COVID-19 vaccine (see definition above)

General quarantine instructions:
- Length of quarantine:
  - People younger than age 2 **AND** anyone else who is unable to wear a mask when around others: **10 days**
  - People older than age 2: **Minimum of 5 days**
    - A shortened quarantine period can be used if the close contact gets a COVID-19 test on **Day 5** or later of the quarantine period.
    - The earliest day people can leave quarantine is on **Day 6**.
    - **If no test is done, quarantine for a full 10 days.**

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[2] You do not have to test if you had confirmed COVID-19 in the past 90 days with recovery, as long as you remain symptom-free.

[3] 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 *Mask and Respirator Guidance* at coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance.

[4] For more information about Test to Stay see: cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/what-you-should-know.html.

- Stay at home during your 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.

After quarantine ends:
- **If you end quarantine after less than 10 days, you should do the following through Day 10:**
  - Continue wearing a well-fitting mask around other people (including household members).
    - **REMEMBER: People who are unable to wear a mask when around others (including children under 2) should quarantine for a for full 10 days.**
  - Continue monitoring yourself for symptoms of COVID-19. If symptoms appear, isolate, repeat testing and consult with your healthcare provider as needed.
  - Do not travel.
  - Do not go to public places where you will need to remove your mask (e.g., restaurants, bars).
  - Eat separately from other household members and co-workers.
  - Do not visit nursing homes.
  - 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 *Guidance for People at Higher Risk for Severe COVID-19* at coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance.

Special quarantine instructions for household members of people with COVID-19:
- If you are a household member of a person with COVID-19, you are automatically considered an **exposed close contact** and should quarantine unless you meet quarantine exception criteria.
- If household members are able to remain **completely** separate from and avoid contact with the infected household member (s) during their isolation period, (e.g., if they stay in a separate household from the infected household member during their isolation period, or stay in a separate area of a large house and are never in the same room as the infected household member), they may follow quarantine and testing instructions detailed in the preceding **General quarantine instructions** section.
- If you are not able to remain separated from the infected 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 following table:*

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IF	You are up to date with your COVID-19 vaccine (see page 2 for definition)	You are unvaccinated or not up to date with your COVID-19 vaccines (see page 2 for definition)	You have a history of COVID-19 in the last 90 days (with recovery)[5]
You are not able to remain separated from the person with COVID-19 during their isolation period	*Quarantine:* Not necessary (provided symptoms do not develop). *Test:* 5 days after you were first exposed and (if negative) test again 5 days after the end of the person with COVID-19's isolation period	*Quarantine:* Quarantine throughout the isolation period of the household member with COVID-19 and continue to quarantine for an additional 5 days after the end of the household member's isolation period. If no COVID-19 testing is done, quarantine for an additional 10 days. *Test:* 5 days after you were first exposed and (if negative) test again 5 days after the end of the person with COVID-19's isolation period	*Quarantine and Testing:* Not necessary (provided symptoms do not develop).
Multiple people in your household test positive for COVID-19 on different dates (and you are not able to stay separated from them)	*Quarantine:* Not necessary (provided symptoms do not develop). *Test:* 5 days after your initial exposure and again 5 days after the end of the **last** household member's isolation period.	*Quarantine:* Quarantine throughout the isolation period of the last household member who tested positive for COVID-19 and continue to quarantine for an additional 5 days after that household member's isolation period ends. If no COVID-19 testing is done, quarantine for an additional 10 days. *Test:* 5 days after you were first exposed and (if negative) test again 5 days after the isolation period of the **last** infected household member ends.	*Quarantine and Testing:* not necessary (provided symptoms do not develop)

Quarantine in healthcare and congregate settings:
- **Healthcare facility and congregate setting residents, patients, and persons supported** (including intermediate care facilities and community residence facilities) who are exposed to COVID-19 **must adhere to quarantine requirements (regardless of vaccination status),** due to the higher risk of severe disease and death in these settings.

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

- Close contacts must:
    - Quarantine for 10 days after exposure.
    AND
    - Get tested immediately (but not earlier than 24 hours after exposure) and, if negative, on days 5-7 and 9-10 after exposure.
        - **If testing is NOT performed, close contacts must quarantine for a full 14 days.**
  - **Quarantine may be waived for close contacts in this setting who have had confirmed COVID-19 (symptomatic or asymptomatic) within the last 90 days with recovery if they do not develop any symptoms of COVID-19. Those who develop symptoms <u>must</u> isolate and get a viral test.**
  - Healthcare personnel[6] who have been exposed to COVID-19 must follow *Guidance for Healthcare Personnel Monitoring, Restriction, and Return to* Work at coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance.
- **Other congregate settings not listed above** (including correctional/detention facilities, homeless shelters) who are exposed to COVID-19 **must adhere to 10 days of quarantine, but do not require a negative test to come out of quarantine.**

Getting tested for COVID-19

- 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,
- Isolate if the test is positive and follow recommendations in *Guidance for Isolation: People who Test Positive for COVID-19 and Their Household Members* at coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance.
- If you test positive, please be aware that the DC Health Contact Trace Team may call you to ask you about your contacts.

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

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[6] **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.