

Coronavirus (COVID-19): Guidance for Quarantine after COVID-19 Exposure

This guidance provides quarantine instructions for close contacts of a person who have tested positive for COVID-19.

Definitions

Close contact: Someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes over a 24-hour period, starting from 2 days before illness onset (or for asymptomatic infected people, 2 days prior to positive test collection) until the time the infected person is isolated.

Fully Vaccinated: An individual is considered fully vaccinated at day 14 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).¹

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

Incubation period: The time period between when someone is exposed to an infectious agent and when the first symptoms appear. The incubation period is different for every pathogen. The incubation period for COVID-19 can be as little as 2 days and as long as 14 days. This is the reason why 14 days has been used as the recommended length of quarantine time for someone who has been exposed to COVID-19.

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, diarrhea, or otherwise feeling unwell.

Quarantine Instructions

If you are a close contact of a person confirmed to have COVID-19, quarantining for 14 days after the last exposure remains the safest course of action.

Based on guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), ending quarantine after 10 days (on day 11) after exposure may be acceptable if:

- You do not develop symptoms of COVID-19 at any point during quarantine.
- AND**
- You continue to self-monitor for symptoms until 14 days after the last exposure. If you develop symptoms at any time in the 14 days after exposure, self-isolate immediately and follow-up with your health care provider for testing.

If you live or work with people at higher risk for COVID-19 (persons with certain chronic health conditions, pregnancy, or age >65), DC Health strongly recommends to quarantine for the full 14 days to minimize risk of COVID-19 exposure.

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) **must adhere to 14 days of quarantine.** It does not include apartment buildings, condominiums, or cooperatives. Please note that facilities and businesses located in DC must follow DC Health guidelines.

¹ Day an individual received final dose of vaccine=Day 0

Persons who have been identified as a close contact of a person with COVID-19 are NOT required to quarantine 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.

NOTE: Persons who are not required must 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 must isolate and follow-up with their healthcare provider for testing.

These quarantine recommendations are intended to minimize the risk of transmission of the virus while also minimizing the burden of quarantine on the public (e.g., potential for economic hardship caused by not being able to go to work). As mentioned, 14 days of quarantine remains the most effective strategy for decreasing the transmission of COVID-19. A person who completes a full 14-day quarantine has only about a 0.1% of spreading COVID-19 after they leave quarantine. Based on CDC estimates, 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%).

For more information about COVID-19 quarantine periods see *Options to Reduce Quarantine for Contacts of Persons with SARS-CoV-2 Infection Using Symptom Monitoring and Diagnostic Testing* at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/more/scientific-brief-options-to-reduce-quarantine.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/more/scientific-brief-options-to-reduce-quarantine.html).

Special Quarantine Considerations for Healthcare Facilities

Healthcare facilities may elect to waive the work restriction requirements for healthcare personnel (HCP) with exposure to a confirmed COVID-19 case. Detailed information can be found in “*Guidance for Healthcare Personnel, Personal Protective Equipment, Monitoring, Restriction, and Return to Work*” at [coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance](https://www.coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance).

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 unknown efficacy of the COVID-19 vaccine in this population, and the higher risk of severe disease and death in these populations, and challenges with physical distancing in healthcare settings.

The guidelines above will continue to be updated as the outbreak evolves. Please visit [coronavirus.dc.gov](https://www.coronavirus.dc.gov) regularly for the most current information.