

COVID-19:

Case Investigation and
Contact Tracing

Job Aids and Resources

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Contact Tracing – CDC’s Role and Approach



Overview

Contact tracing is an effective disease control strategy that involves identifying cases and their contacts then working with them to interrupt disease transmission. This includes asking cases to isolate and contacts to quarantine at home voluntarily. **Contact tracing is a key strategy to prevent the further spread of COVID-19.**

Case investigation is the identification and investigation of patients with confirmed and probable diagnoses of COVID-19 (cases). **Contact tracing**, also referred to as contact investigation, is the identification, monitoring, and support of the individuals (contacts) who have been exposed to the patient and possibly infected themselves. This process prevents further transmission of disease by separating people who have (or may have) an infectious disease from people who do not.

Prompt identification, voluntary isolation or quarantine, and monitoring of a person diagnosed with COVID-19 and their contacts can effectively break the chain of disease transmission and prevent further spread of the virus. Case investigation and contact tracing are core disease control measures that have been used by state and local health departments for decades to slow or stop the spread of infectious diseases.

Core Principles of Contact Tracing during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Contact tracing should be conducted for [close contacts](#) of confirmed or probable COVID-19 patients.

Contact tracing steps include:

1. **Case investigation:** Public health staff work with a patient to help them recall everyone with whom they have had close contact during the time when they may have been infectious. For COVID-19, a [close contact](#) is defined as any individual who was within 6 feet of an infected person for a total of 15 minutes or more starting from 48 hours before the person began feeling sick until the time the patient is isolated.
2. **Contact tracing:** Public health staff begin contact tracing by notifying exposed individuals (contacts) of their potential exposure as rapidly and sensitively as possible, not revealing the infected patient’s identity.

3. **Contact support:** Contacts are provided with education, information, and support to help them understand their risk, what they should do to separate themselves from others who are not exposed, and how to monitor themselves for illness. In addition, they are informed of the possibility that they could spread the infection to others even if they themselves do not feel ill.
4. **Self-quarantine:** Contacts are encouraged to stay home and maintain social distance from others (at least 6 feet) until 14 days after their last exposure to the infected patient, in case they also become ill.

Every effort should be made to interview the patient and contacts by telephone, text, or video conference instead of in person. Contact tracing is a labor-intensive process that requires a well-trained workforce of effective communicators who can approach individuals with compassion and build trust.



CDC's Role in COVID-19 Contact Tracing

Communities must scale up and train a large case investigation and contact tracer workforce and work collaboratively across public and private agencies to stop the transmission of COVID-19. As the nation's public health agency and the primary resource for State, Tribal, Local, and Territorial (STLT) health departments on managing disease outbreaks, CDC's primary role in contact tracing is to provide guidance and support to help STLT health departments launch effective contact tracing programs. The ultimate goal is for STLT jurisdictions to have robust public health systems that include a fully developed contact tracing workforce. In support of this goal, CDC is providing STLTs with guidance, training, and technical assistance on contact tracing.

CDC also provides COVID-19 assistance directly to STLT health departments through over 300 CDC field assignees embedded in health departments across the nation. Moreover, CDC links STLTs with other federal agencies, academia, and other organizations that offer contact tracing/case management staffing solutions.

To support surge staffing needs in health departments and tribal communities, CDC has funded the CDC Foundation to hire local staff to augment STLT jurisdictions' COVID response efforts, including contact tracing. The CDC Foundation will work with health departments and Area Indian Health Boards (AIHBs) to hire and place public health professionals, including contact tracers, in health departments and AIHBs.

Important Considerations for Contact Tracing

There are several key considerations for developing STLT jurisdictional contact tracing plans:

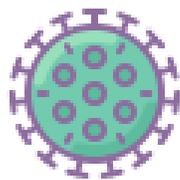
- **Expanding staffing resources.** Contact tracing in the United States will require that states, tribes, localities and territories recruit and hire adequate levels of well-trained case investigators and contact tracers.
- **Training staff.** Successful case investigation and contact tracing for COVID-19 depends on a robust and well-trained public health workforce. Contact tracing requires staff with adequate training, excellent and tactful interpersonal skills, cultural sensitivity, and language and interviewing skills that allow them to build and maintain trust with clients and contacts.

- **Identifying cases and contacts.** Case investigators must be able to advise people with probable or confirmed COVID-19 infection to self-isolate immediately, if they are not doing so already. Case investigators also must be prepared to interview cases and ask them to identify people who may have been exposed (contacts). Investigators then need to provide support to help cases self-isolate and determine if they need social services.
- **Tracing and monitoring contacts of infected people.** Contact tracers must be able to notify contacts of their exposure, advise them to self-quarantine, and to self-monitor for COVID-19 symptoms. They need to be able to determine what support services contacts need to effectively self-quarantine.
- **Monitoring the effectiveness of contact tracing.** Public health officials should be prepared to monitor the completeness and timeliness of contact tracing activities, including the number of cases identified among contacts.
- **Using digital tools.** Adoption and evaluation of digital case management or contact tracing tools may make the traditional contact tracing process faster and more efficient.

CDC continues to engage with each state health department to review these key areas and address barriers that could prohibit them from effectively conducting contact tracing.

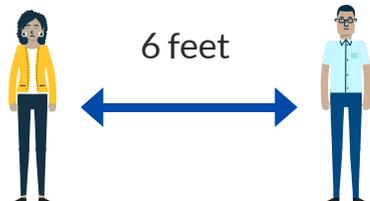
Tools and Resources

As many states face the need to rapidly scale up their staff capacity, CDC is providing programmatic guidance, technical assistance, and resources to help them hire and train new and existing staff. CDC has developed a range of guidance documents and is facilitating access to a variety of case investigation and contact tracing training products and tools for a diverse and evolving public health workforce. These products and tools are available through the [Get and Keep America Open](#) website, which is continuously updated. A wealth of information is available, including the [Interim Guidance on Developing a COVID-19 Case Investigation & Contact Tracing Plan](#), resources on how to train a workforce, and guidance on using digital tools for contact tracing. CDC also partners with national organizations and other partners to identify and share lessons learned and promising practices associated with surge staffing and continuous improvement in contact tracing and case investigation practices.



Terminology

CORONAVIRUS COVID-19



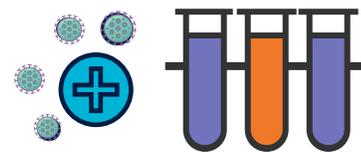
SOCIAL DISTANCING

Also known as "physical distancing" means keeping space (at least 6 feet) between yourself and other people outside of your home



SHELTER IN PLACE

Staying at home unless you're working to provide essential services or conducting essential activities (i.e. obtaining food & supplies)



CASE

The person who has been diagnosed with an infection of COVID-19



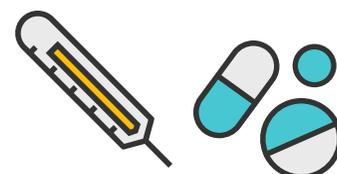
CONTACT

Persons who may have been exposed to those who have COVID-19



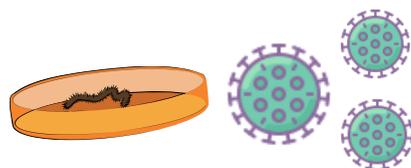
QUARANTINE

Keeping someone who was likely exposed to COVID-19 away from others



ISOLATION

Separating people infected with COVID-19 (including asymptomatic persons) from people who are not infected



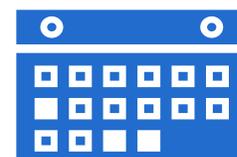
INCUBATION PERIOD

The time from exposure to an infectious agent until signs and symptoms of the disease appear



INFECTIOUS PERIOD

The time when someone who is infected can spread the infection to others (usually no longer than 10 days after symptom onset for mild and moderate cases)



CONTACT ELICITATION WINDOW

The time frame when the case was infectious and not under isolation



CULTURAL HUMILITY AND COVID-19

Guidelines for cross-cultural
interactions



Use the **Three Tenets of Cross-Cultural Communication** to cultivate strong relationships in order to counteract fears and encourage safe behaviors during the pandemic.



EMPATHY

Empathy is not a feeling, it's an action. Show patients you care about what they're going through. Do this by listening, using attentive body language, and using reflective language.



CURIOSITY

Show patients that you're interested and alert to the challenges posed by the pandemic. Ask direct questions about how it is impacting their lives and their loved ones.



RESPECT

Misinformation abounds during times of heightened fear. Avoid judging patients who follow treatment and prevention advice that is not medically-based or scientifically sound.



QUALITY
INTERACTIONS

Find more resources at qualityinteractions.com

COVID-19 Case Investigation/Contact Tracing: How to Address Concerns During Case Investigation/Contact Tracing

CASE/CONTACT CONCERN	INTERVIEWER RESPONSE
"Do I have to give you my date of birth?"	"I am asking for your date of birth because I have some important and confidential medical information that I need to discuss with you. I want to make sure I'm giving this information to the right person. If you feel more comfortable providing just the month and date, this is fine. I will not be asking for any bank account, Medicare or Medical insurance numbers. If anyone ever does ask you to provide this type of information, then you know the call is not legitimate. May I have your date of birth or birth month and date, please?"
"How did you get my name?"	"Part of my role with the health department is to work with those who have COVID-19 (also known as the coronavirus) and those who have been in contact with the virus. Someone you have come in contact with tested positive for the coronavirus and asked that I reach out to you."
"Why are you calling me?"	"I am calling all those in our community who have the coronavirus or have come in contact with the virus. Our interest in contacting you is to make sure you are healthy, you get the medical information you need to protect yourself and others, and to offer testing and support services. At this time, I am reaching out to you because you have come in contact with the virus and I would like to share some important information with you about how you can protect your friends and family. What have you heard about COVID-19, or the coronavirus?"
"You've already called me twice! Why are you calling me again?"	<p>"Thanks for letting me know! Sometimes if multiple people who test positive identify you as a close contact or if there are multiple kids from a family, you appear more than once on our list. I apologize for the duplication. Let me take a step back then and ask you if you would be willing to share with me what your plan is for isolation/ quarantine, and whether there are any questions you have or additional resources you might need to help you be successful."</p> <p><i>If the case/contact is willing to speak with you:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try to get them to at least tell you for how long they are planning to isolate/quarantine. • Ask if there are other members of the household they have been called about and whether anyone has developed new symptoms or needs. • If they are unwilling to talk further, end the interview and make a case note explaining what the situation is and why not all the questions were answered, and as an alert so other investigators/ tracers know they've been called before.
"What are you going to do with my information"	"All of your personal information such as your name and contact information will be kept confidential and only the communicable disease staff at the health department will have access to it. The health department uses demographic and locating information to determine how many people we still need to reach and test, to measure what we need to do as a community to knock this virus out and to determine who in our community may need special services. Overall, the information you provide helps us stop the spread of COVID-19 and make sure you and others are healthy."

<p>"Do I have to talk to you?"</p>	<p>"No. You don't have to talk to me. But I hope that you are willing to talk to me at least long enough for me to share some important information about your contact with the coronavirus, where you can get tested and how you can stay healthy and safe."</p>
<p>"I don't have any medical insurance. Where can I go to be tested?"</p>	<p>"Please don't worry about the cost of testing. At this time, it's free. You can be tested at _____ from ____ a.m. to ____ p.m. The only item you need to bring is _____ (if any). Are there any other challenges that you have to getting tested, such as transportation? When do you think you can get tested?"</p>
<p>"I don't have a regular place to live"</p>	<p>"Thank you for letting me know. I imagine that must be very stressful. I can assist you with finding a place to live during self-isolation/quarantine (if available). If you would like, I can also connect you with other services such as food, medical care and other social services. COVID-19 testing services are also free in our community, and I can refer you to those as well. What are your thoughts about what we just discussed?"</p>
<p>"I'm pretty sure I've already had coronavirus. So I should be immune now, right?"</p>	<p>"Thanks for letting me know! That's a great question. Were you tested and received a positive result? (wait for a response). I'm glad you know your status, however, more research is still being conducted to learn more about whether previous infections lead to immunity and how long that immunity may last, as there have been some reports of re-infection. The most conservative approach would be to re-quarantine if you are able, as this may prevent transmission to your loved ones and members of your community. May I have our clinician lead call you back to find out more?"</p>
<p>"I feel good. I don't have any symptoms!"</p>	<p>"I'm glad to hear you're feeling well. However, from what we know about the coronavirus at this time, some people can experience no signs or symptoms and still have the virus. Those without symptoms may unknowingly pass the virus to others. For those who do get symptoms, it can take 2-14 days after being infected to show symptoms like a fever, cough and shortness of breath. To avoid transmitting the virus in case you are infected it is important that you stay at home and distance yourself from others (this is called quarantine) until the end of the 14 days. The best way to know your status is to test for this virus</p>
<p>"The person you are calling for passed away last week."</p>	<p>"I'm sorry for your loss, please accept my condolences (pause and allow person to respond). I am calling from the team at XX County that is following up on people who came into contact with someone who tested positive for the virus. I imagine this is a difficult time, however, we can discuss what next steps you can take regarding your possible exposure, as well as some resources to support you during this difficult time.</p> <p>If this isn't a good time, I totally understand but want to make sure you have the information if you need it.</p> <p><i>If the person decides to continue to speak with you:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try to sense whether the person wants to talk about the person they've lost; of course, they may just want to get off the phone. • There is now no need to gather information about the person you were originally calling for. • If they are open to speaking with you, explain why you were calling in the first place; now extend those services to the person you reached on the phone. • Depending on your sense of how distraught the person is, you can ask if they would like to talk about what they can do to get tested for the virus and/or if they know their status • If you ask them this, be gentle in your approach and be clear that if they don't want to have this discussion, it is totally OK. • If they don't want to talk, tell them you will text them a number they can call to get more information about what they can do to get themselves tested.

<p>If you have any concern that someone may be experiencing violence or abuse or if they are alluding to violence or abuse of others, you will need to alert your clinician lead immediately. You will want to let the contact know that someone will follow up with them, using a script like this.</p>	<p>"What you are saying makes me concerned for you and your safety. I'm going to ask my clinician lead to call you right back. They will want to ask your questions to make sure you are safe and get the help you need. Is this the best number at which they can reach you?"</p>
<p>"How can you expect me to stay home for two weeks!"</p>	<p>"I hear your frustration. Asking someone to self-isolate/quarantine for two weeks is a big deal! Many people have responsibilities or living situations that make it hard to stay at home for two weeks. May I ask you what is hardest about staying at home for you?"</p> <p><i>Note to case investigator/ contact tracer: Depending on their answer, you may be able to connect them with services or to help them think about their options for meeting their needs/responsibilities.</i></p>
<p>"What happens if I don't stay at home?"</p>	<p>"We can't force people to stay at home. However, if you choose to go out, you risk passing the virus on to people around you, even before you show any symptoms, and some of those people may become very sick. We are relying on each person in our community to help keep their friends and family safe right now. It sounds like staying at home might be difficult or frustrating for you. What are some challenges or barriers that will make staying at home hard for you?"</p>
<p>"I can't lose any more income right now. I have lost enough already."</p>	<p>"This is a hard time financially for a lot of people. I'm really sorry that it has been hard for you. Would it be okay for me to ask about some of your needs, such as food and utilities, to see if there are any resources that may be able to help you?"</p>
<p>"I heard that if you get sick and you are in a small house, they take you away from your family for two weeks, even if you have little kids."</p>	<p>"Our county is providing supportive housing for people who will have trouble with self-isolation/quarantine effectively in their home. However, isolating or quarantining is voluntary. No one is being forcibly removed from their home, and there are no family separations. Many people choose to take advantage of the housing, because it's a way that they can protect their family."</p>
<p>"But the person who got sick is out of isolation now, so why do I have to quarantine?"</p>	<p>"That's a great question. Thank you for asking! What have you heard about something called an 'incubation period?'"</p> <p><i>Key information to share if they don't already know it:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An incubation period is the time that a person is infected but is not showing symptoms. • For the coronavirus that causes COVID-19, the incubation period can be 2-14 days long. • You can transmit the virus to others even before you have symptoms, or even if you are infected but never show symptoms. • We wait 14 days and check for symptoms to be sure that if someone is going to get sick, we catch it while they are in quarantine so that they don't transmit it to others. • That 14 days starts at the last time that you could have been exposed to someone who was sick. <p>"That's a lot of new information. What do you think about that?"</p>

MOTIVATIONAL TECHNIQUES	EXAMPLE
1. Importance and Confidence Scale	<p>On a scale of 0-10, where 0 is not important at all and 10 is very important, how important is it that you not get your parents sick? After hearing this follow up with on the same scale of 0-10, how confident are you that you will be able to take all the steps necessary to not risk your parents getting ill? After whatever number is given (e.g. if the person says 4, follow up with what would a 5 or 6 look like? Why did you say 4 and not 2, what are you already doing to reduce their risk?</p>
2. What Other People Do	<p>Some people I have talked with in a similar situation have gotten their dogs walked by asking a neighbor for help or hiring a dog walker, how would any of these work for you? What ideas to do you have?</p>
3. Weighing Pros and Cons	<p>What benefits are there to isolating for the time required? What would be the benefits of just doing what you are doing and not isolating? What would be the cost in isolating? What would be the cost of not isolating? (Let the person say whatever it is) and read back their statements following it up with a question such as: hearing what you just said, “What do you think the first step would be for you (in keeping safe?)</p>
4. Questions to Evoke Change	<p>“What would be the most important thing for you to do to protect the members of your household? “How might you do that?”</p>
5. Offer Options	<p>Would it be okay if I gave you some options for staying connected to your parents while in isolation?</p> <p>You can stay connected to your parents during this time through regular phone calls, video chats, and having someone drop in on them and sending you a text, or having one of your family members visit them on your behalf, which one of these options would work best for you?</p>

6. Ask-Tell-Ask	<p>Aside, from wearing a mask what else do you do to prevent COVID-19 when you are out in public?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• After asking this question, the contact would share some information that you could then build on with your own knowledge.• Next, you would ask, something like "how does the information I shared relate to your situation" or "so that I can understand that what I said was clear, can you let me know what you just heard?"
7. Develop Discrepancy	<p>It sounds like you really care about your parents' health but are unsure you will be able to stop visiting them despite your exposure to the virus.</p>
8. Express Empathy	<p>Having your grandfather in the hospital must be very hard for you.</p>



CRITICAL CALCULATIONS



ISOLATION: (remember 10 days)

Symptomatic Case



At least 10* days from the date of symptom onset

*possibly up to 20 days with severe disease



And no fever for at least 24 hours (without use of anti-fever medications)



And symptoms significantly improving

Asymptomatic Case

10 days after the date first positive test taken and case continues to have no symptoms

CONTACT ELICITATION WINDOW: (remember 2 days)



Symptomatic Case

2 days prior to onset of symptoms through first day of isolation



Asymptomatic Case

2 days prior to first diagnostic test through the first day of isolation

QUARANTINE PERIOD: (remember 14 days)



14 days from last exposure to case*



Quarantine can end after Day 10 without testing & if no symptoms have been reported during daily monitoring

*When diagnostic testing resources are sufficient & available (see below), quarantine can end after Day 7 if a diagnostic specimen tests negative & if no symptoms were reported during daily monitoring. The specimen may be collected & tested within 48 hours before planned quarantine discontinuation (e.g., due to testing delays), but quarantine cannot be discontinued earlier than after Day 7.

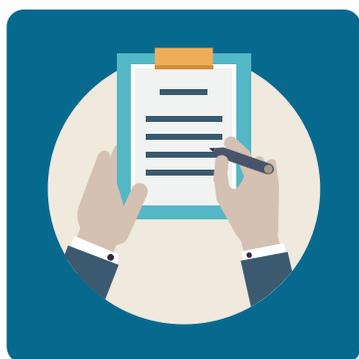
CDC currently recommends a quarantine period of 14 days. However, based on local circumstances and resources, there are options to shorten quarantine as an acceptable alternative. For more information visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/more/scientific-brief-options-to-reduce-quarantine.html>

In both cases, additional criteria (e.g., continued symptom monitoring & masking through Day 14 must be met and are outlined in the full text. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/more/scientific-brief-options-to-reduce-quarantine.html>



Prioritizing Case Investigations and Contact Tracing for COVID-19 in High Burden Jurisdictions

OVERVIEW



CDC released new recommendations prioritizing case investigations and contact tracing to assist health departments experiencing escalating COVID-19 cases. These new recommendations further refine existing prioritization recommendations and presents new modeling data regarding timeframes to maximize the effectiveness of contact tracing activities.

KEY PRIORITIZATION RECOMMENDATIONS INCLUDES:



Prioritize case investigation interviews for people diagnosed with COVID-19 in the past 6 days (based on specimen collection date or symptom onset, if known).



Prioritize contact tracing efforts on household contacts exposed in past 6 days, and people living, working or visiting congregate living facilities, high density workplaces or other settings (or events) with potential extensive transmission.



If more than 14 days have elapsed since the specimen was collected, case investigation should generally not be pursued.

Please see a summary of recommendations for prioritization of COVID-19 case investigation and contract tracing below.

PRIORITIZING COVID-19 CASE INVESTIGATION AND CONTACT TRACING

HIGHEST PRIORITY ACTIVITIES

For cases, prioritize case investigations for people diagnosed with COVID-19 in the past 6 days (based on specimen collection date or symptoms onset, if known)

For contacts, prioritize:

- Household contacts exposed in the past 6 days
- people living, working, or visiting congregate living facilities, high density workplaces or other settings (or events) with potential extensive transmission

NEXT LEVEL PRIORITY ACTIVITIES

As resources allow, expand case investigations and contact tracing to people outside the household who are:

- At increased risk for severe illness
- Part of a cluster
- Exposed within the last 6 days

LOW PRIORITY ACTIVITIES

- As resources allow or COVID-19 case rates decline, expand case investigation interviews to people with positive COVID-19 test specimens collected in the past 14 days, and expand contact tracking to all contacts exposed within the past 14 days
- **If more than 14 days have elapsed since specimen collection, case investigation and contact tracking should generally not be pursued**



FOR MORE INFORMATION

The new case investigation and contact tracing prioritization recommendations are available on CDC's web site at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/contact-tracing/contact-tracing-plan/prioritization.html>

For more information and resources on Contact Tracing, refer to Contract Tracing Resources for Health Departments at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/open-america/contact-tracing-resources.html>

The Contact Tracing Program Support Team is available to provide technical assistance, and can be reached at CDC IMS NCOV Response STLT Clearance eocevent423@cdc.gov.

Share facts about COVID-19

Know the facts about coronavirus (COVID-19) and help stop the spread of rumors.

**FACT
1**

Diseases can make anyone sick regardless of their race or ethnicity.

Fear and anxiety about COVID-19 can cause people to avoid or reject others even though they are not at risk for spreading the virus.

**FACT
2**

For most people, the immediate risk of becoming seriously ill from the virus that causes COVID-19 is thought to be low.

Older adults and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions may be at higher risk for more serious complications from COVID-19.

**FACT
3**

Someone who has completed quarantine or has been released from isolation does not pose a risk of infection to other people.

For up-to-date information, visit CDC's coronavirus disease 2019 web page.

**FACT
4**

There are simple things you can do to help keep yourself and others healthy.

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; going to the bathroom; and before eating or preparing food.
- When in public, wear a cloth face covering that covers your mouth and nose.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.

**FACT
5**

You can help stop COVID-19 by knowing the signs and symptoms, which can include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

Seek medical attention immediately if you or someone you love has emergency warning signs, including:

- Trouble breathing
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- New confusion or not able to be woken
- Bluish lips or face

This list is not all inclusive. Please consult your medical provider for any other symptoms that are severe or concerning.



Frequently Asked Questions (CDC)

The CDC has updated the "Share Facts About COVID-19" (found on the previous page) through this redirect link to Frequently Asked Questions:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/share-facts.html>

10 things you can do to manage your COVID-19 symptoms at home

Accessible Version: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html>

If you have possible or confirmed COVID-19:

1. **Stay home** from work and school. And stay away from other public places. If you must go out, avoid using any kind of public transportation, ridesharing, or taxis.



6. **Cover your cough and sneezes** with a tissue or use the inside of your elbow.



2. **Monitor your symptoms** carefully. If your symptoms get worse, call your healthcare provider immediately.



7. **Wash your hands often** with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.



3. **Get rest and stay hydrated.**



8. As much as possible, **stay** in a specific room and **away from other people** in your home. Also, you should use a separate bathroom, if available. If you need to be around other people in or outside of the home, wear a mask.



4. If you have a medical appointment, **call the healthcare provider** ahead of time and tell them that you have or may have COVID-19.



9. **Avoid sharing personal items** with other people in your household, like dishes, towels, and bedding.



5. For medical emergencies, call 911 and **notify the dispatch personnel** that you have or may have COVID-19.



10. **Clean all surfaces** that are touched often, like counters, tabletops, and doorknobs. Use household cleaning sprays or wipes according to the label instructions.



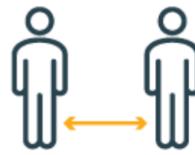
COVID-19 (Coronavirus Disease)

[MENU >](#)

CASES ARE RISING.
ACT NOW!



WEAR A MASK



STAY 6 FEET APART



AVOID CROWDS

Isolate If You Are Sick

Separate yourself from others if you have COVID-19

Updated Dec. 22, 2020



Isolation is used to separate people infected with COVID-19, even those who are not infected.

People who are in isolation should stay home until it's safe for them to be around others. At home, anyone sick or infected should separate from others, stay in a specific "sick room" or area, and use a separate bathroom (if available).

Isolation or Quarantine: What's the difference?

Quarantine keeps someone who might have been exposed to the virus away from others.

Isolation keeps someone who is infected with the virus away from others, even in their home.

Who needs to isolate?

People who have COVID-19

- People who have [symptoms of COVID-19](#) and are able to recover at home
- People who **don't have symptoms** but have tested positive for COVID-19

Steps to take

Stay home except to get medical care

- Monitor your symptoms. If you have an [emergency warning sign](#) (including trouble breathing), seek emergency medical care immediately
- Stay in a separate room from other household members, if possible
- Use a separate bathroom, if possible
- Avoid contact with other members of the household and pets
- Don't share personal household items, like cups, towels, and utensils
- Wear a mask when around other people, if you are able to

[Learn more about what to do if you are sick.](#)

Confirmed and suspected cases of reinfection of the virus that causes COVID-19

[Cases of reinfection](#) of COVID-19 have been reported but are rare. In general, reinfection means a person was infected (got sick) once, recovered, and then later became infected again. Based on what we know from similar viruses, some reinfections are expected.

When you can be around others after you had or likely had COVID-19

When you can be around others (end home isolation) depends on different factors for different situations.

Find CDC's recommendations for your situation below.

I think or know I had COVID-19, and I had symptoms

You can be with others after

- At least 10 days since symptoms first appeared **and**
- At least 24 hours with no fever without fever-reducing medication **and**
- Other symptoms of COVID-19 are improving**Loss of taste and smell may persist for weeks or months after recovery and need not delay the end of isolation

If you had severe illness from COVID-19 (you were admitted to a hospital and needed oxygen), your healthcare provider may recommend that you stay in isolation for longer than 10 days after your symptoms first appeared (possibly up to 20 days) and you may need to finish your period of isolation at home.

I tested positive for COVID-19 but had no symptoms

If you continue to have no symptoms, you can be with others after:

- 10 days have passed since the date you had your positive test

If you develop symptoms after testing positive, follow the guidance above for "I think or know I had COVID, and I had symptoms."

I had COVID-19 or I tested positive for COVID-19 and I have a weakened immune system

If you have a [weakened immune system \(immunocompromised\)](#) due to a health condition or medication, you might need to stay home and isolate longer than 10 days. Talk to your healthcare provider for more information.

Your doctor may work with [an infectious disease expert at your local health department](#) to determine when you can be around others.

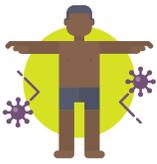
Getting testing again for COVID-19

If you have recovered from your symptoms after testing positive for COVID-19, you may continue to test positive for three months or more without being contagious to others. For this reason, you should be tested only if you develop new symptoms of possible COVID-19. Getting tested again should be discussed with your healthcare provider, especially if you have been in close contact with another person who has tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 14 days.

If you have symptoms and test positive for COVID-19, follow the guidance above for "I think or know I had COVID, and I had symptoms." Your doctor may work with [an infectious disease expert at your local health department](#) to determine when you can be around others.

COVID-19 Vaccine Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

ABOUT THE VACCINE



HOW DOES COVID-19 VACCINE WORK?

Vaccines work with your body's natural defenses so your body will be ready to fight the virus if you are exposed. This is also called immunity. COVID-19 vaccination works by teaching your immune system how to recognize and fight the virus that causes COVID-19, and this protects you from getting sick with the virus.

For more information on understanding how COVID-19 vaccines work, visit:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/different-vaccines/how-they-work.html>



WILL THE VACCINE GIVE ME COVID-19?

No. There is no live virus in the vaccines, so they can't infect you.



HOW DID THEY MAKE THE VACCINE SO QUICKLY?

Many pharmaceutical companies invested significant resources into quickly developing a vaccine for COVID-19 because of the world-wide impact of the pandemic. Both Pfizer and Moderna used similar processes when developing their vaccine. Even though COVID-19 is new, these types of viruses (called coronaviruses) have been studied since the 1960s. This knowledge helped scientists understand the virus to make a vaccine.



HOW DO I REALLY KNOW IF COVID-19 VACCINES ARE SAFE?

The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) reviews all data before recommending any COVID-19 vaccine. More than 70,000 people of different ages, races, ethnicities, and medical conditions participated in clinical trials to make sure the vaccines meet safety standards and offer the protections we need.

For more information on ensuring the safety of COVID-19 vaccines in the U.S., visit:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/safety.html>



IS THE COVID-19 VACCINE SAFE FOR CHILDREN?

Yes, the vaccine has proven to be highly effective and safe in children both in clinical studies and real-world data. Currently, only Pfizer has been approved for children 12 and older. Moderna will likely be available soon as well but is currently authorized for ages 18 and up, as Johnson & Johnson.



I HAVE ALLERGIES. SHOULD I TAKE THE VACCINE?

CDC recommends that people with a history of severe allergic reactions not related to vaccines or injectable medications—such as food, pet, venom, environmental, or latex allergies—get vaccinated. If you have concerns, consult your health care provider.

For information about COVID-19 vaccines for people with allergies, visit:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/recommendations/specific-groups/allergies.html>

IF I HAVE ALREADY HAD COVID-19 AND RECOVERED, DO I STILL NEED TO GET VACCINATED WITH A COVID-19 VACCINE?



Yes, you should be vaccinated regardless of whether you already had COVID-19. That's because experts do not yet know how long you are protected from getting sick again after recovering from COVID-19. Even if you have already recovered from COVID-19, it is possible—although rare—that you could be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 again.

For more information about why getting vaccinated is a safer way to build protection than getting infected, visit:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/vaccine-benefits.html>

If you were treated for COVID-19 with monoclonal antibodies or convalescent plasma, you should wait 90 days before getting a COVID-19 vaccine. Talk to your doctor if you are unsure what treatments you received or if you have more questions about getting a COVID-19 vaccine.

Experts are still learning more about how long vaccines protect against COVID-19 in real-world conditions. CDC will keep the public informed as new evidence becomes available.

IS THERE ANY REASON I SHOULDN'T GET THE VACCINE?



Because of age, health conditions, or other factors, some people should not get certain vaccines or should wait before getting them.

To learn more about who should **NOT** get the vaccine, visit:

<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/info-by-product/clinical-considerations.html>

I'M PREGNANT OR BREASTFEEDING; SHOULD I GET THE VACCINE?



According to the CDC, we don't yet have information about how safe it is for people who are pregnant to get a vaccine for COVID-19. However, they do state that if you are breastfeeding or are pregnant and are part of a group recommended to receive the vaccine, you may choose to be vaccinated. We suggest you talk with your health care provider so you can make an informed decision. To learn more about vaccination considerations for people who are pregnant or breastfeeding, visit:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/recommendations/pregnancy.html>

DO I STILL HAVE TO WEAR A MASK AFTER GETTING THE VACCINE?



Yes. It's possible for you to spread the virus even after getting the vaccine. The vaccine is designed to stop the virus from making you sick. We don't yet know if the vaccine will stop you from spreading the virus so it's important to continue wearing a mask, avoiding crowds, socially distancing, and washing your hands frequently.

VACCINE EFFECTIVENESS

DO THE VACCINES WORK DIFFERENTLY OR HAVE DIFFERENT SIDE EFFECTS FOR PEOPLE OF DIVERSE AGES, RACIAL BACKGROUNDS, SEXES, AND OTHER DIFFERENCES?



Trial results have shown that the vaccines are safe and work well for adults of all ages, races, genders, and ethnic backgrounds.

HOW LONG WILL THE COVID-19 VACCINE LAST?



The research is not complete on this. Further research will tell us more about how long immunity lasts and if people will need more shots in the future.

DOES THE VACCINE STERILIZE WOMEN?



No. Stories and claims on social media and anti-vaccination websites saying that the vaccine interferes with the formation of the placenta are false. There is no evidence the vaccine would result in sterilization of women.

GETTING VACCINATED



WHO IS PAYING FOR THE COVID-19 VACCINES?

The federal government is providing the vaccines free of charge to all people living in the United States. Vaccination providers can be reimbursed for vaccine administration fees by the patient's public or private insurance company or, for uninsured patients, by the Health Resources and Services Administration's Provider Relief Fund. No one can be denied a vaccine if they are unable to pay a vaccine administration fee.



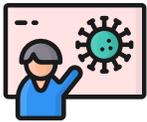
WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I GET THE VACCINE?

The Moderna and Pfizer vaccines currently available require two shots spaced 3–4 weeks apart. The first shot helps your body recognize the virus and helps prepare your immune system, and the second shot strengthens that immune response. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine requires only 1 shot to be effective.



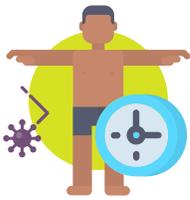
WHAT HAPPENS IF I ONLY GET 1 SHOT?

For the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines, you need both shots to be fully protected. We strongly recommend that you get both shots. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine requires only 1 shot to be effective.



WILL I BE ABLE TO CHOOSE WHICH VACCINE I GET?

No. The vaccine you get will be based on what your provider has available. All COVID-19 vaccines currently available in the United States have been shown to be effective at preventing COVID-19.



HOW LONG DOES PROTECTION FROM A COVID-19 VACCINE LAST?

We don't know how long protection lasts for those who are vaccinated. What we do know is that COVID-19 has caused very serious illness and death for a lot of people. If you get COVID-19, you also risk giving it to loved ones who may get very sick. Getting a COVID-19 vaccine is a safer choice.

Experts are working to learn more about both natural immunity and vaccine-induced immunity. CDC will keep the public informed as new evidence becomes available.



DO I NEED TO HAVE A COVID-19 TEST BEFORE I GET THE VACCINE?

No, you do not need a COVID-19 test before getting a vaccine.



CAN I STILL GET COVID-19 AFTER I GET THE VACCINE?

All COVID-19 vaccines currently available in the United States have been shown to be highly effective at preventing COVID-19. While it's possible you can still get COVID-19 and be sick even if you get the vaccination, most studies show that most people who get the vaccine, get less sick than those who do not get the vaccine. But until we can vaccinate everyone and because we don't know if the vaccine can stop you from spreading the virus, it's important to continue wearing a mask, avoiding crowds, socially distancing, and washing your hands frequently.

To learn more about the different COVID-19 vaccines, please visit:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/different-vaccines.html>



CAN I GET VACCINATED AGAINST COVID-19 WHILE I AM CURRENTLY SICK WITH COVID-19?

No. People with COVID-19 who have symptoms should wait to be vaccinated until they have recovered from their illness and have met the criteria for discontinuing isolation; those without symptoms should also wait until they meet the criteria before getting vaccinated. This guidance also applies to people who get COVID-19 before getting their second dose of vaccine.

For more information, visit:

- Discontinuation of Isolation for Persons with COVID-19 Not in Healthcare Settings: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/disposition-in-home-patients.html>
- Quarantine Guidelines: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine.html>

WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER VACCINATION



WHAT ARE THE SIDE EFFECTS?

Most people will have no side effects but the vaccine may cause side effects in some people. For most, side effects will last no longer than a day or two.

Possible side effects include:

On the arm where you got the shot:

- Pain, redness, and swelling

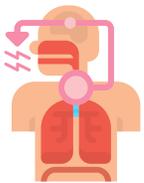
Throughout the **rest of** your body:

- Fever, chills, headache, tiredness, joint and body aches

To **reduce pain and discomfort** where you got the shot:

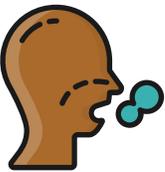
- Apply a clean, cool, wet washcloth over the area
- Use or exercise your arm

To reduce other symptoms, talk to your doctor about taking an over-the-counter medication such as Tylenol or Ibuprofen. Side effects are a sign that the vaccine is working to help teach your body how to fight COVID-19 if you are exposed. They do NOT mean you have COVID-19. You can't get COVID-19 from the vaccine. If you have questions about your health after your shot, call your doctor, nurse, healthcare provider or clinic.



ARE THERE LONG-TERM SIDE EFFECTS FROM THE COVID-19 VACCINE?

Because all COVID-19 vaccines are new, it will take more time and more people getting vaccinated to learn about very rare or possible long-term side effects.



WHAT IF I AM VACCINATED BUT EXPOSED AGAIN TO SOMEONE WITH COVID-19?

- Fully vaccinated people with **no COVID-like symptoms do not need to quarantine** or be tested following an exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19, as their risk of infection is low.
- Fully vaccinated people who do not quarantine **should still monitor for symptoms** of COVID-19 **for 14 days** following an exposure.
- if they experience symptoms, they should isolate themselves from others, be clinically evaluated for COVID-19, including SARS-CoV-2 testing, if indicated, and inform their health care provider of their vaccination status at the time of presentation to care.

VACCINE PLANNING



WHEN CAN I GET THE COVID-19 VACCINATION?

States will determine who will get vaccinated and when. Each state will outline plans that are based on who is most at risk for contracting the virus. It is best to check with your local and/or state health department for the most current information around vaccination in your area.

MONITORING THE SAFETY OF THE COVID-19 VACCINES



THERE ARE SEVERAL SAFETY MONITORING SYSTEMS SET UP IN THE U.S., INCLUDING:

COVID-19 vaccines are **safe** and **effective**. Millions of people in the United States have received COVID-19 vaccines under the most intense safety monitoring in U.S. history. CDC recommends you get a COVID-19 vaccine as soon as you are eligible. If you have any questions or want more information, please visit any of the links below to submit your questions or report any adverse events (possible side effects or health problems) that occur after vaccination.

- Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS): www.vaers.hhs.gov
- Vaccine Safety Datalink (VSD): www.cdc.gov/vaccinesafety/ensuringsafety/monitoring/vsd/index.html
- Clinical Immunization Safety Assessment Project (CISA): www.cdc.gov/vaccinesafety/ensuringsafety/monitoring/cisa/index.html
- "V-Safe": www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/safety.html
- Vaccine Reporting Systems: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/reporting-systems.html>
- COVID-19 Vaccine Safety Monitoring Systems for Pregnant People: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/safety/monitoring-pregnant-people.html>



MONITORING THE SAFETY OF COVID-19 VACCINES FOR CHILDREN?

- As of June 9, 2021, more than 165 million adults (18+) and 7 million adolescents (12-17y) have received at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine in the United States, and CDC continues to monitor the safety of COVID-19 vaccines for any health problems that happen after vaccination.
- Since April 2021, there have been increased reports to the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS) of cases of inflammation of the heart—called myocarditis and pericarditis—happening after mRNA COVID-19 vaccination (Pfizer and Moderna) in the United States. These reports are rare, given the number of vaccine doses administered. CDC is actively monitoring and investigating the reports to see whether there is any relationship to COVID-19 vaccination.
- Most patients with myocarditis and pericarditis who received care responded well to medicine and rest and quickly felt better. The known and potential benefits of COVID-19 vaccination outweigh the known and potential risks, including the possible risk of myocarditis or pericarditis.
- For more information on myocarditis and pericarditis following mRNA COVID-19 vaccination, visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/safety/myocarditis.html>



FOR ANY ADDITIONAL INFORMATION & QUESTIONS ABOUT THE COVID-19 VACCINES, PLEASE VISIT:

Frequently Asked Questions about COVID-19 Vaccination: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/faq.html>

CLINICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR VACCINATED PERSONS



INTERIM CLINICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR USE OF MRNA COVID-19 VACCINES | CDC

For more information, visit:

- Interim Clinical Considerations for Use of COVID-19 Vaccines Currently Authorized in the United States: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/info-by-product/clinical-considerations.html>
- CDC Guidance for Vaccinated Persons: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- CDC Travel Guidance: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>
- Quarantine Guidance: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine.html>

Adapted from the Vaccine FAQs developed by the City & County of San Francisco

CDC and ASTHO Resources-Infographics Links

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/isolation.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/contact-tracing.html>

[ASTHO MAKING CONTACT JOB AIDS](#)