# Contact Tracing

Contact tracing is key to slowing the spread of COVID-19 and helps protect you, your family, and your community.

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Updated Feb. 25, 2021

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

## Contact tracing slows the spread of COVID-19

Contact tracing helps protect you, your family, and your community by:

• Letting people know they may have been exposed to COVID-19 and should monitor their health for signs and symptoms of COVID-19.

• Helping people who may have been exposed to COVID-19 get tested.

• Asking people to self-isolate if they have COVID-19 or self-quarantine if they are a close contact.

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During contact tracing, the health department staff **will not** ask you for:

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• Money

• Social Security number

• Bank account information

• Salary information

• Credit card numbers

## Contact tracing for COVID-19 works best with everyday preventive actions

You can take everyday preventive actions to slow the spread of COVID-19. Doing so is especially important until a vaccine or better treatments become widely available. At this time, if you have been vaccinated for COVID-19, you should follow existing CDC guidance on when and how long to self-isolate if you have COVID-19 or self-quarantine if you are a close contact. CDC continues to closely monitor the evolving science for information that would warrant changes to the recommendations for quarantine of close contacts.

What you can expect to happen

### If you were around someone diagnosed with COVID-19

If you were around someone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19, someone from the health department may call you.

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Stay home and away from others:

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• Stay away from others, especially people who are at higher risk for getting very sick from COVID-19, such as older adults and people with other medical conditions, if possible.

• If you have been around someone with COVID-19, stay home and away from others for 14 days (self-quarantine) after your last contact with that person and monitor your health.

• If you have a fever, cough or other symptoms of COVID-19, stay home and away from others (except to get medical care or testing, if recommended).

• If you need support or assistance while in self-quarantine, your health department or community organizations may be able to provide assistance.

• The best way to protect yourself and others is to stay home for 14 days if you think you’ve been exposed to someone who has COVID-19. Check your local health department’s website for information about options in your area to possibly shorten this quarantine period. [[\*sk1\*]]

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For COVID-19, a close contact is anyone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for a total of 15 minutes or more. An infected person can spread COVID-19 starting from 48 hours (or 2 days) before the person has any symptoms or tests positive for COVID-19. A person is still considered a close contact even if they were wearing a mask while they were around someone with COVID-19.

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Monitor your health:

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• Watch for fever, cough, shortness of breath, or other symptoms of COVID-19. Remember, symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to COVID-19.

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**Answer the phone call from the health department.** If someone from the health department calls you, answer the call to help slow the spread of COVID-19 in your community.

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• Discussions with health department staff are **confidential**. This means that your personal and medical information will be kept private and only shared with those who may need to know, like your health care provider.

• Your name will not be shared with those you came in contact with. The health department will only notify people you were in close contact with (within 6 feet for a total of 15 minutes or more) that they might have been exposed to COVID-19.

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**Tell the health department staff if you develop symptoms of COVID-19.** If your symptoms worsen or become severe, you should seek emergency medical care.

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**Did you know?** Health department staff may use case management or exposure notification digital tools to help with contact tracing. Learn more about these types of digital tools at https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html#Contact-Tracing.

## If you are waiting for a COVID-19 test result

If you think you may have COVID-19 and are waiting for a COVID-19 test result, stay home and monitor your health to protect your friends, family and others from possibly getting COVID-19.

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Stay home and away from others:

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• Stay away from others while waiting for your COVID-19 test result, especially people who are at higher risk for getting very sick from COVID-19, such as older adults and people with other medical conditions, if possible.

• If you have been around someone with COVID-19, stay home and away from others for 14 days (self-quarantine) after your last contact with that person and monitor your health.

• If you have a fever, cough or other symptoms of COVID-19, stay home and away from others (except to get medical care).

• If you need support or assistance while in self-quarantine, your health department or community organizations may be able to provide assistance.

• The best way to protect yourself and others is to stay home for 14 days if you think you’ve been exposed to someone who has COVID-19. Check your local health department’s website for information about options in your area to possibly shorten this quarantine period. [[\*sk1\*]]

[[\*sk1\*]]

Monitor your health:

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• Watch for fever, cough, shortness of breath, or other symptoms of COVID-19. Remember, symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to COVID-19.

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**Think about the people you have recently been around.** While you wait for your COVID-19 test result, think about everyone you have been around recently. This will be important information to have available. If your test is positive, someone from the health department may call you to check on your health, discuss who you have been around, and ask where you spent time while you may have been able to spread COVID-19 to others.

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Follow your health department’s guidelines when you receive your COVID-19 test result.

• Positive test, whether or not you have symptoms

\_ If your **test is positive,** refer to the section What you can expect to happen if you are diagnosed with COVID-19

• Negative test and you do not have symptoms

\_ If your **test is negative** and **you do not have symptoms,** continue to stay away from others (self-quarantine) for 14 days after your last exposure to COVID-19 and follow all recommendations from the health department.

\_ A negative result before the end of your quarantine period does not rule out possible infection.

\_ You do not need a repeat test unless you develop symptoms.

• Negative test and you have symptoms

\_ If your **test is negative** and you **have symptoms** you should continue to stay away from others (self-quarantine) for 14 days after your last exposure to COVID-19 and follow all recommendations from the health department. A second test and additional medical consultation may be needed if your symptoms do not improve.

\_ If your symptoms worsen or become severe, you should seek emergency medical care.

• The best way to protect yourself and others is to stay home for 14 days if you think you’ve been exposed to someone who has COVID-19. Check your local health department’s website for information about options in your area to possibly shorten this quarantine period.

## If you are diagnosed with COVID-19

If you are diagnosed with COVID-19, someone from the health department may call you to

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• Check on your health,

• Discuss who you have been around, and

• Ask where you have spent time while you may have been able to spread COVID-19 to others.

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**Discussions with health department staff are confidential.** This means that your name and personal and medical information will be kept private and only shared with those who may need to know, like your health care provider.

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• Your name will not be shared with those you came in contact with. The health department will only notify people you were in close contact with (within 6 feet for a total of 15 minutes or more) that they might have been exposed to COVID-19.​

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**Any information you share with health department staff is CONFIDENTIAL.** This means that your name and personal and medical information will be kept private.

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Stay home and away from others:

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You will be asked to stay at home and self-isolate, if you are not doing so already.

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• **Stay home and away from others 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 and use a separate bathroom, if possible.

\_ Avoid contact with other household members and pets.

\_ Don’t share personal household items, like cups, towels, and utensils.

\_ Wear a mask when around other people, if able. Learn more about what to do if you are sick at https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html.

• Self-isolation helps slow the spread of COVID-19 and can help keep your family, friends, neighbors, and others healthy.

• If you need support or assistance while in self-isolation, your health department or community organizations may be able to provide assistance.

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**Monitor your health:** If your symptoms worsen or become severe, you should seek emergency medical care.

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You can be around others after

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• 10 days since symptoms first appeared **and**

• 24 hours with no fever without the use of fever-reducing medications, **and**

• Other symptoms of COVID-19 are improving.

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Tell your close contacts.

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• If you are diagnosed with COVID-19, tell your close contacts that they may have been exposed to COVID-19.

• An infected person can spread COVID-19 starting 48 hours (or 2 days) before the person has any symptoms or tests positive.

• By letting your close contacts know they may have been exposed to COVID-19, you are helping to protect everyone.

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Content source: National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases (NCIRD), Division of Viral Diseases