



Frequently Asked Questions: COVID-19 Quarantine

Q: What is the difference between quarantine and isolation?

A: 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.

Q: Who needs to quarantine?

A: People who have been in close contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19 while they were infectious (starting 48 hours prior to the onset of symptoms, or the date of the test for those without symptoms, until the end of the person's isolation period). Identifying and quarantining close contacts limits their ability to spread disease should they become infectious and helps to limit community spread.

Q: What counts as close contact?

- You were within 6 feet of someone who has COVID-19 for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period.
- You provided care at home to someone who is sick with COVID-19
- You had direct physical contact with the person (hugged or kissed them)
- You shared eating or drinking utensils
- They sneezed, coughed, or somehow got respiratory droplets on you.

Q: What should I do if I have had close contact with someone who has COVID-19?

A: The best way to protect yourself and others if you think you have been exposed to someone who has COVID-19 is to stay home and maintain social distancing through the end of your quarantine period (10 days from the date of your last exposure to a positive case or a 7-day quarantine with a negative test on or after day 5 of quarantine).

If possible, stay away from others in your household, especially people who are at higher risk for getting very sick from COVID-19.

Monitor yourself daily for symptoms, including checking your temperature. Watch for fever, cough, shortness of breath, or other symptoms of COVID-19.

If you develop symptoms, contact your health care provider and see if you should be tested for COVID-19.

Q: Can someone who has been quarantined for COVID-19 spread the illness to others?

A: Quarantine means separating a person or group of people who have been exposed to a contagious disease but have not developed illness from others who have not been exposed, in order to prevent the possible spread of that disease.

Quarantine is usually established for the incubation period of the communicable disease, which is the span of time during which people have developed illness after exposure. Someone who has been released from COVID-19 quarantine is not considered a risk for spreading the virus to others because they have not developed illness during the incubation period.

Q: How long does quarantine last?

A: In general, quarantine can end after 10 days from the date of your last exposure as long as no symptoms have developed *OR* after Day 7 of quarantine with a negative test result taken on or after day 5 of quarantine as long as no symptoms have developed. While the test can occur on Day 5 or later, quarantine cannot be discontinued earlier than the end of Day 7.

DPH strongly recommends that if rapid antigen testing is performed, the specimen be collected and tested no sooner than Day 7 of quarantine.

Q: Where can I get a test to end quarantine?

A: Testing can be obtained at any community testing site, including Curative and DPH Walgreens sites, as well as through a primary care provider. Visit [de.gov/gettested](https://www.de.gov/gettested) to find a site nearest you or contact a primary care provider.

Q: If I get a negative test, can I end quarantine?

A: Quarantine can end after Day 7 if you received a negative result from a diagnostic test taken within 48 hours of the time of planned quarantine discontinuation as long as no symptoms were reported during daily monitoring. This means that you can obtain a test as early as Day 5 of quarantine, but you cannot end quarantine until a total of 7 days have passed no matter when your results were received.

Individuals should continue to monitor for symptoms for a full 14 days after their last exposure to a COVID-positive person. If any symptoms develop, immediately self-isolate and contact your health care provider or DPH to report the change in symptom status. In addition, you should continue to strictly adhere to prevention recommendations – wear a face covering, wash hands frequently, social distance by staying 6 feet away from others, and avoid gatherings.

Q: What if I get a positive test?

A: If your test is positive, you are considered actively infected with COVID-19, and must isolate for 10 days following your first diagnostic test, or your first day of symptoms (whichever came first), and until it's been at least 24 hours since you've had a fever (without using medications to decrease fever).

Q: What if I am a resident or staff member at a long-term care facility or other congregate setting, such as a correctional facility?

A: Within congregate settings where there is a high risk of sustained transmission of COVID-19, such as long-term care facilities and correctional facilities, DPH recommends a quarantine period of 14 days.

Q: Where can I go to get a letter stating that I have finished my quarantine?

A: The Division of Public Health does not require quarantine clearance letters. If your employer or school requires a quarantine clearance letter for you to return, and you meet the quarantine clearance requirements and would like to request a letter from the Division of Public Health, visit: de.gov/ClearanceLetterRequest.

For additional information about Delaware's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, visit de.gov/coronavirus.