

What to do if you were potentially exposed to someone with COVID-19

Summary of January 26, 2022 Changes

- Updated quarantine guidance to align with [CDC Isolation and Quarantine guidance](#) for the general public.
- Updated quarantine guidance for [congregate settings](#).

Introduction

If you have been exposed to COVID-19, or think you have been exposed, you can help prevent the spread of the virus to others in your home and community. Please follow the guidance below. Please note the additional guidance for specific settings here:

- Students and staff in K-12 schools should follow the [K-12 requirements](#).
- People who are staying or working in a health care facility should follow the guidance from CDC's [Interim Guidance for Managing Healthcare Personnel with SARS-CoV-2 Infection or Exposure to SARS-CoV-2](#) and [CDC's Interim Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Healthcare Personnel During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) Pandemic](#).
- If you work or are staying in a corrections or detention facility, homeless shelter, or transitional housing, please follow the guidance under [Information for people staying or working in certain congregate settings](#).

Local health jurisdictions may use their discretion, based on considerations such as outbreak control and preventive measures in place, to relax or expand upon these recommendations.

I had close contact with someone who tested positive COVID-19 but I am not sick. What should I do?

You **do not** need to quarantine if you:

- Are [up to date](#) on your COVID-19 vaccinations, including boosters and additional doses, based on your age and health status.
 - If you completed your primary series and are not yet eligible for your booster, you must have received the final dose in your primary series at least 2 weeks before exposure to the person with COVID-19 in order to not need to quarantine.
- Tested positive for COVID-19 with a [viral test](#) within the previous 90 days and recovered.

While you do not need to quarantine, you should take the following steps:

- Get tested for COVID-19 at least 5 days after your last contact with the person with COVID-19. If you test positive, follow the guidance in [What to do if you test positive for COVID-19 \(wa.gov\)](#).
 - If you have tested positive for COVID-19 with a [viral test](#) within the previous 90 days and recovered, use an antigen test (not a PCR test) to test at least 5 days after your last contact with the person with COVID-19.
- Wear a [well-fitting mask](#) around others at home and in public for 10 days after your last close contact with the person with COVID-19; continue to wear a mask even if you test negative for COVID-19 on day 5.
- Watch for symptoms for 10 days after your last contact with the person with COVID-19.
- If symptoms develop, [get tested](#) and follow the steps under [I had close contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19 and now I'm sick. What should I do?](#)

Quarantine [at home](#) if you:

- Are unvaccinated or have not completed a COVID-19 primary vaccine series; OR
- Are not [up to date](#) on your COVID-19 vaccinations, including boosters and additional doses, based on your age and health status.

In addition to quarantining at home:

- Get tested for COVID-19 with a [viral test](#) at least 5 days after your last contact with the person with COVID-19. If you test positive, follow the guidance in [What to do if you test positive for COVID-19 \(wa.gov\)](#).
- Watch for symptoms for 10 days after your last contact.
 - If you have any [COVID-19 symptoms](#): isolate, [get tested](#), and follow the steps under [I had close contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19 and now I'm sick. What should I do?](#)

How long should you quarantine?

If you [can](#) wear a well-fitting mask around others at home and in public:

If you can wear a [well-fitting mask](#), you should quarantine at home for **5 days** after your last contact with the person with COVID-19, followed by consistent mask use when around others at home or in public for an **additional 5 days** (through day 10). During quarantine, wear a well-fitting mask if you are around others at home, if possible. Consistent mask use means wearing a well-fitting mask whenever around others inside or outside the home and not engaging in activities around others during which you cannot wear a mask, such as sleeping, eating, or swimming. No mask alternatives (e.g., face shield with drape) may be used as substitutes during the 5 days of additional masking.

- If you test negative or are unable to test at least 5 days after your date of last contact with the person with COVID-19, you can leave quarantine so long as you remain asymptomatic but continue to wear a well-fitting mask when around others at home and in public through day 10.

- Do not [travel](#) during your 5-day quarantine period. Get tested at least 5 days after your last close contact and make sure your test result is negative and you remain without symptoms before traveling. If you don't get tested, delay travel until 10 days after your last close contact with a person with COVID-19. If you must travel before the 10 days are completed, wear a well-fitting mask when you are around others for the entire duration of travel during the 10 days. If you are unable to wear a mask, you should not travel during the 10 days.
- Do not go to places where you are unable to wear a mask, such as restaurants and some gyms, and avoid eating around others at home and at work until after 10 days after your last close contact with someone with COVID-19.
- If possible, stay away from people you live with, especially people who are at [higher risk](#) for getting very sick from COVID-19, as well as others outside your home throughout the full 10 days after your last close contact with someone with COVID-19.
- For at least 10 days after your exposure to the person with COVID-19, avoid people who are [immunocompromised or at high risk for severe disease](#), and do not go to healthcare facilities (including nursing homes) and other high-risk settings.
- People who work in crowded work sites where physical distancing is not possible due to the nature of the work (e.g., warehouses, factories, and food packaging and meat processing facilities) should quarantine (stay away) from work for 10 days after their last contact with the person with COVID-19, but they can follow the shortened home quarantine guidance above if they can wear a [well-fitting mask](#).
- People who reside in temporary worker housing should quarantine for 10 days after their last contact with the person with COVID-19.
- People staying or working in commercial maritime settings (e.g., commercial seafood vessels, cargo ships, cruise ships) should quarantine for 10 days after their last contact with the person with COVID-19. See [CDC guidance](#) for information on working quarantines in these settings.

If you [cannot](#) wear a well-fitting mask around others at home and in public:

If you cannot wear a [well-fitting mask](#), you should quarantine at home for **10 days** after your last contact with the person with COVID-19. Do not travel during the 10 days of quarantine.

Information for people staying or working in certain congregate settings:

People who stay or work correctional facilities, detention facilities, homeless shelters, and transitional housing should quarantine regardless of vaccination or booster status or having recovered from a COVID-19 infection in the past 90 days.

- People who stay in these settings should quarantine for 10 days after their last contact with the person with COVID-19, and they should get tested at least 5 days after their last contact with the person with COVID-19.
- People who work but do not live in these settings should not go to their workplace for 10 days after their last contact with the person with COVID-19, but they can follow the home quarantine guidance above based on whether they can or cannot wear a [well-fitting mask](#).

During periods of critical staffing shortages, correctional facilities, detention facilities, homeless shelters, and transitional housing may consider shortening the quarantine period for staff to ensure continuity of operations. Decisions to shorten quarantine in these settings should be made in consultation with the local health jurisdiction.

How was I exposed to COVID-19?

The virus that causes COVID-19 most commonly spreads between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet, or 2 arm lengths). People with COVID-19 can spread the virus to other people starting two days before they develop symptoms (or 2 days before the date of their positive test if they do not have symptoms) through 10 days after they develop symptoms (or 10 days after the date of their positive test if they do not have symptoms).

If a person with COVID-19 is isolating for 5 days followed by 5 days of consistent mask use out of isolation because their symptoms were improving or gone on day 5, people exposed to the case days 6-10 are not close contacts so long as the case is wearing a [well-fitting mask](#). If the case is not wearing a well-fitting mask, people exposed to the case on days 6-10 are considered close contacts.

Being a close contact generally means you have been within 6 feet of someone with COVID-19 for at least 15 cumulative minutes or more over a 24-hour period of time. Some people get COVID-19 without knowing how they were exposed. If someone with COVID-19 tells public health they have recently been in close contact with you, you may be contacted to [participate in a public health interview](#).

How do I calculate my quarantine period?

The date of your exposure to the person with COVID-19 during their contagious period is day 0. Day 1 is the first full day after your last close contact with the person with COVID-19.

What to do for quarantine

- **Monitor for symptoms.** Get medical help right away if your symptoms get worse. If you have a medical emergency and need to call 911, tell the dispatch staff that you have COVID-19 symptoms. If possible, put on a face covering before emergency services arrive.
- **Separate from others**, including household members and pets, as much as possible. Stay in a separate room and use a separate bathroom, if possible. If you must care for a family member or an animal, wear a face covering and wash your hands before and after you interact with them. There is more information about [COVID-19 and Animals](#) at the site linked.
- **Wear a [well-fitting mask](#)** when you are around others and before you enter a healthcare provider's office. If you are not able to wear a well-fitting mask, people in your household should not be in the same room with you; they should wear a well-fitting mask or respirator if they must enter your room.
- **Take steps to [improve ventilation at home](#)**, if possible.

- **Don't share personal items with anyone**, including dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, or bedding with people or pets in your home.

Participate in a public health interview

If someone with COVID-19 tells public health they have recently been in close contact with you, you may hear from public health by text or phone call. An interviewer will help you understand what to do and what support is available. The interviewer will not tell you who gave them your name. If you later become ill, they will ask you for the names and contact information of people you had close contact with recently to notify them about exposure. They will not share your name with your close contacts.

I had close contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19 and now I'm sick. What should I do?

If you were exposed to COVID-19 and develop [symptoms](#) (even mild ones), you should stay home and away from others and get tested for COVID-19 with a [viral test](#), regardless of vaccination status. Contact your health care provider for a test. Tell them you were exposed to someone with COVID-19 and are now sick.

- If you test negative by an antigen test, your healthcare provider may recommend a confirmatory test.
- If you are using a [self-test](#), follow the instructions in your self-test testing product.

Wear a [well-fitting mask](#) if you must be around other people inside or outside your household. Other people outside of your household should wear a mask or respirator if you must be around them. If your symptoms get worse or you develop new symptoms, consult with a healthcare provider.

If somebody does not have a health care provider: Many locations have free or low-cost testing, regardless of immigration status. See the [Department of Health's Testing FAQ](#) or call the [WA State COVID-19 Information Hotline](#).

If you are a close contact and develop symptoms, get tested and follow the appropriate guidance:

Test result after symptoms began	Close contact is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to date on COVID-19 vaccinations, including boosters and additional doses, based on age and health status. • Tested positive for COVID-19 with a viral test within the previous 90 days and recovered. 	Close contact is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unvaccinated or has not completed a primary vaccine series. • Not up to date on COVID-19 vaccinations, including boosters and additional doses, based on age and health status.
Positive or not tested	Follow the guidance in What to do if you test positive for COVID-19 (wa.gov) . If you are not tested, follow the same isolation and mask guidance as people who test positive.	Follow the guidance in What to do if you test positive for COVID-19 (wa.gov) . If you are not tested, follow the same isolation and mask guidance as people who test positive.

Negative	<p>Stay home until:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You have had no fever within the past 24 hours without using fever-reducing medication, AND Your symptoms have significantly improved. <p>Resume the guidance above regarding mask wearing, testing, and quarantine if you stay or work in a congregate setting (see I had close contact with someone who tested positive COVID-19 but I am not sick. What should I do? section).</p>	<p>Resume quarantine (see I had close contact with someone who tested positive COVID-19 but I am not sick. What should I do? section).</p>
-----------------	---	--

What's the difference between isolation and quarantine?

- **Isolation** is what you do if you have COVID-19 symptoms, are awaiting test results, or have tested positive for COVID-19. Isolation means you stay home and away from others (including household members) for the recommended [period of time](#) to avoid spreading illness.
- **Quarantine** is what you do if you have been exposed to COVID-19. Quarantine means you stay home and away from others for the recommended [period of time](#) in case you are infected and are contagious. Quarantine becomes isolation if you later test positive for COVID-19 or develop COVID-19 symptoms.

More COVID-19 Information and Resources

Stay up-to-date on the [current COVID-19 situation in Washington](#), [Governor Inslee's proclamations](#), [symptoms](#), [how it spreads](#), and [how and when people should get tested](#). See our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) for more information.

A person's race/ethnicity or nationality does not, itself, put them at greater risk of COVID-19. However, data are revealing that communities of color are being disproportionately impacted by COVID-19- this is due to the effects of racism, and in particular, structural racism, that leaves some groups with fewer opportunities to protect themselves and their communities. [Stigma will not help to fight the illness](#). Share accurate information with others to keep rumors and misinformation from spreading.

- [WA State Department of Health 2019 Novel Coronavirus Outbreak \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [WA State Coronavirus Response \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Find Your Local Health Department or District](#)
- [CDC Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Stigma Reduction Resources](#)

Have more questions? Call our COVID-19 Information hotline: **1-800-525-0127**

Monday – 6 a.m. to 10 p.m., Tuesday – Sunday and [observed state holidays](#), 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. For interpretative services, **press #** when they answer and **say your language**. For questions about your own health, COVID-19 testing, or testing results, please contact a health care provider.

To request this document in another format, call 1-800-525-0127. Deaf or hard of hearing customers, please call 711 ([Washington Relay](#)) or email civil.rights@doh.wa.gov.

What to do if you test positive for COVID-19

Summary of January 26, 2022 Changes

- Updated isolation guidance to align with [CDC Isolation and Quarantine guidance](#) for the general public.
- Added information on [what to do if you test positive with a self-test](#).

Introduction

If you test positive for COVID-19, you can help stop the spread of COVID-19 to others. Please follow the guidance below.

- Students and staff in K-12 schools should follow the [K-12 requirements](#).
- People who are staying or working in a health care facility should follow the guidance from CDC's [Interim Guidance for Managing Healthcare Personnel with SARS-CoV-2 Infection or Exposure to SARS-CoV-2](#) and [CDC's Interim Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Healthcare Personnel During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) Pandemic](#).

Isolate at home

People who test positive for COVID-19 or those who have symptoms for COVID-19 and are waiting test results should go home and isolate. **You should isolate regardless of your vaccination status.** Do not go to work, school, or public areas. Avoid using public transportation, ridesharing, or taxis. Ask others to do your shopping or use a grocery delivery service.

Separate as much as possible from others at home by staying in a specific room away from other people and using a separate bathroom if available. Wear a [well-fitting mask](#) when you need to be around others.

You should stay home except to get medical care. Call before you go to the doctor. Tell your health care provider you have COVID-19 or are being evaluated for COVID-19. [Participate in a public health interview](#).

How long do I need to isolate myself?

How long you should isolate depends on whether you can wear a well-fitting mask; whether you are severely ill with COVID-19 or have a weakened immune system; and whether you are staying or working in a congregate setting. Please see the section below that applies to you.

If you **can** wear a well-fitting mask around others at home and in public:

If you tested positive for COVID-19 and had [symptoms](#), isolate for at least **5 days** after your symptoms first appeared. See below to [calculate your 5-day isolation period](#). You can leave isolation after 5 full days if:

- Your symptoms are improving 5 days after the start of your isolation, and
- You have not had a fever for 24 hours without use of fever-reducing medication, and
- You continue to consistently wear a [well-fitting mask](#) around others at home and in public for 5 additional days

If you continue to have a fever or your other symptoms have not improved after 5 days of isolation, wait to end your isolation until you are fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication and your other symptoms have improved.

If you tested positive for COVID-19 but have not had any [symptoms](#), isolate for at least **5 days** after you tested positive for COVID-19. See below to [calculate your 5-day isolation period](#). You can leave isolation after 5 full days if:

- You have not developed symptoms, and
- You continue to consistently wear a [well-fitting mask](#) around others at home and in public for 5 additional days

If you do develop symptoms after testing positive, your 5-day isolation should start over. Follow the recommendations above for ending isolation if you had symptoms.

Consistent mask use means wearing a [well-fitting mask](#) whenever around others inside or outside the home and not engaging in activities around others during which you cannot wear a mask, such as sleeping, eating, or swimming. No mask alternatives (e.g., face shield with drape) may be used as substitutes during the 5 days of additional masking.

If an individual has access to a test and wants to test, the best approach is to use an [antigen test](#)¹ towards the end of the 5-day isolation period. Collect the test sample only if you are fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication and your other symptoms have improved (loss of taste and smell may persist for weeks or months after recovery and need not delay the end of isolation). If your test result is positive, you should continue to isolate until day 10. If your test result is negative, you can end isolation, but continue to wear a [well-fitting mask](#) around others at home and in public until day 10. Follow additional recommendations for masking and restricting [travel](#).

¹As noted in the [labeling for authorized over-the-counter antigen tests](#): Negative results should be treated as presumptive. Negative results do not rule out SARS-CoV-2 infection and should not be used as the sole basis for treatment or patient management decisions, including infection control decisions. To improve results, antigen tests should be used twice over a three-day period with at least 24 hours and no more than 48 hours between tests.

Here is additional guidance for the 10 days after you developed symptoms (or tested positive, if you never developed symptoms):

- For the full 10 days, avoid people who are [immunocompromised or at high risk for severe disease](#), and do not go to healthcare facilities (including nursing homes) and other high-risk settings.
- For the full 10 days, do not [travel](#).
- For the full 10 days, do not go to places where you are unable to wear a mask, such as restaurants and some gyms, and avoid eating around others at home and at work.

If you [cannot](#) wear a well-fitting mask around others at home and in public:

If you tested positive for COVID-19 and had symptoms, you can stop your home isolation after **10 days** have gone by since your symptoms first appeared if:

- You have not had a fever for 24 hours without use of fever reducing-medication, **AND**
- Your symptoms have gotten better

If you continue to have a fever or your other symptoms have not improved after 10 days of isolation, wait to end your isolation until you are fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication and your other symptoms have improved.

If you tested positive for COVID-19, but have not had any symptoms, you can stop your home isolation after **10 days** have gone by since you tested positive for COVID-19 if:

- You have not developed symptoms

If you do develop symptoms after testing positive, your 10-day isolation should start over. Follow the recommendations above for ending isolation if you had symptoms.

If you are severely ill with COVID-19 or have a weakened immune system:

People who are severely ill with COVID-19 (including those who were hospitalized or required intensive care or ventilation support) and people with [compromised immune systems](#) might need to isolate at home longer. They may also require testing with a [viral test](#) to determine when they can be around others. CDC recommends an isolation period of at least 10 and up to 20 days for people who were severely ill with COVID-19 and for people with [weakened immune systems](#). Consult with your healthcare provider about when you can resume being around other people.

If you are staying or working in any of these congregate settings:

People who live or work in the following congregate setting should follow the isolation recommendations as outlined below.

- Correctional or detention facility
- Homeless shelter or transitional housing
- Commercial maritime setting (e.g., commercial seafood vessels, cargo ships, cruise ships)
- Crowded work setting where physical distancing is not possible due to the nature of the work, such as in warehouses, factories, and food packaging and meat processing facilities
- Temporary worker housing

If you tested positive for COVID-19 and had symptoms, you can end isolation from the congregate setting after **10 days** have gone by since your symptoms first appeared if:

- You have not had a fever for 24 hours without use of fever reducing-medication, and
- Your symptoms have improved

If you work but do not live in the congregate setting, do not go to workplace for a full 10 days, but you may follow the shortened home isolation guidance above based on whether you can or cannot wear a [well-fitting mask](#).

If you tested positive for COVID-19, but have not had any symptoms, you can end isolation from the congregate setting after **10 days** have gone by since you tested positive for COVID-19 if:

- You have not developed symptoms

If you do develop symptoms after testing positive, your 10-day isolation from this setting should start over. Follow the recommendations above for ending isolation if you had symptoms. If you work but do not live in the congregate setting, do not go to the workplace for a full 10 days, but you may follow the shortened home isolation guidance above based on whether you can or cannot wear a [well-fitting mask](#).

During periods of critical staffing shortages, correctional facilities, detention facilities, homeless shelters, transitional housing, and critical infrastructure workplaces may consider shortening the isolation period for staff to ensure continuity of operations. Decisions to shorten isolation in these settings should be made in consultation with the local health jurisdiction.

When am I potentially contagious and might expose others?

People with COVID-19 can spread the virus to other people starting two days before they develop symptoms (or 2 days before the date of their positive test if they do not have symptoms) through 10 days after they develop symptoms (or 10 days after the date of their positive test if they do not have symptoms).

If a person with COVID-19 is isolating for 5 days followed by 5 days of consistent mask use out of isolation because their symptoms were improving or gone on day 5, people exposed to the case days 6-10 are not close contacts so long as the case is wearing a [well-fitting mask](#). If the case is not wearing a well-fitting mask, people exposed to the case on days 6-10 are considered close contacts.

How do I calculate my 5-day or 10-day isolation period?

If you have symptoms, day 0 is your first day of symptoms. Day 1 is the first full day after your symptoms developed.

If you have not had any symptoms, day 0 is your positive viral test date (the date you were tested). Day 1 is the first full day after the specimen was collected for your positive test.

What to do during isolation

- **Monitor for symptoms.** Get medical help right away if your symptoms get worse. If you have a medical emergency and need to call 911, tell the dispatch staff that you have

COVID-19 symptoms. If possible, put on a face covering before emergency services arrive.

- **Separate from others**, including household members and pets, as much as possible. Stay in a separate room and use a separate bathroom, if possible. If you must care for a family member or an animal, wear a face covering and wash your hands before and after you interact with them. There is more information about [COVID-19 and Animals](#) at the site linked.
- **Wear a [well-fitting mask](#)** when you are around others and before you enter a healthcare provider's office. If you are not able to wear a well-fitting mask, people in your household should not be in the same room with you; they should wear a well-fitting mask or respirator if they must enter your room.
- **Take steps to [improve ventilation at home](#)**, if possible.
- **Don't share personal items with anyone**, including dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, or bedding with people or pets in your home.

Participate in a public health interview

An interviewer from public health may contact you if you test positive for COVID-19, usually by phone. The interviewer will help you understand what to do next and what support is available. The interviewer will ask for the names and contact information of people you have had close contact with recently to notify them about exposure. They ask for this information so they can notify people who may have been exposed. The interviewer will not share your name with your close contacts.

If you tested positive using a self-test

Please see [Interim SARS-CoV-2 Self-Testing Guidance \(wa.gov\)](#) for more information.

What's the difference between isolation and quarantine?

- **Isolation** is what you do if you have COVID-19 symptoms, are awaiting test results, or have tested positive for COVID-19. Isolation means you stay home and away from others (including household members) for the recommended [period of time](#) to avoid spreading illness.
- **Quarantine** is what you do if you have been exposed to COVID-19. Quarantine means you stay home and away from others for the recommended [period of time](#) in case you are infected and are contagious. Quarantine becomes isolation if you later test positive for COVID-19 or develop COVID-19 symptoms.

More COVID-19 information and resources

If somebody does not have a doctor or health care provider: many locations have free or low-cost testing, regardless of immigration status. See the [Department of Health's Testing FAQ](#) or call the [WA State COVID-19 Information Hotline](#).

Stay up-to-date on the [current COVID-19 situation in Washington](#), [Governor Inslee's proclamations](#), [symptoms](#), [how it spreads](#), and [how and when people should get tested](#). See our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) for more information.

A person's race/ethnicity or nationality does not, itself, put them at greater risk of COVID-19. However, data are revealing that communities of color are being disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. This is due to the effects of racism, and in particular, structural racism, that leaves some groups with fewer opportunities to protect themselves and their communities. [Stigma will not help to fight the illness](#). Share only accurate information to keep rumors and misinformation from spreading.

- [WA State Department of Health 2019 Novel Coronavirus Outbreak \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [WA State Coronavirus Response \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Find Your Local Health Department or District](#)
- [CDC Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Stigma Reduction Resources](#)

Have more questions? Call our COVID-19 Information hotline: **1-800-525-0127**

Monday – 6 a.m. to 10 p.m., Tuesday – Sunday and [observed state holidays](#), 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. For interpretative services, **press #** when they answer and **say your language**. For questions about your own health, COVID-19 testing, or testing results, please contact a health care provider.

To request this document in another format, call 1-800-525-0127. Deaf or hard of hearing customers, please call 711 ([Washington Relay](#)) or email civil.rights@doh.wa.gov.