

Guidelines for Minimizing Contagious Disease in the Community

January 31, 2022

Staying home when contagious with COVID (or an illness that looks like it) will reduce the risk of spreading disease. The guidelines in this document can be used by individuals and organizations when they encounter COVID-like symptoms.

Individual with Symptoms

For Individuals

If you develop symptoms that could be caused by COVID take the following steps:

1. Determine the cause of your symptoms. Be evaluated for COVID if...
 - You have **two or more** of the following symptoms:
 - Fever (either a measured, elevated temperature or if you feel feverish)
 - Chills
 - Rigors (shaking or shivering)
 - Myalgia (muscle aches and pain)
 - Headache
 - Sore throat
 - Nausea or vomiting
 - Diarrhea
 - Fatigue
 - Congestion or runny nose
 - You have **at least one** of the following symptoms:
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath
 - Difficulty breathing
 - New loss of taste or smell OR newly experiencing that food tastes strange or funny
 - Your doctor thinks you should be tested for COVID.
2. Stay home while contagious.
 - Even if you don't have COVID, passing illness to others could make them think they could have COVID.
 - Your doctor can tell you when you will no longer be contagious.
3. Stay away from others in your household as much as possible.
 - This may be difficult to do all the time, especially if you have small children or your child is the sick individual. Do what you can to minimize exposure, including wearing a mask when able.
4. If you do not have COVID, get a doctor's note confirming when you can safely return to your normal activities.
5. If you have COVID, follow all public health guidelines about when and how you can safely return to your normal activities.
 - You can learn more about COVID recovery and how to keep others healthy by visiting the CDC's webpage on [Quarantine and Isolation](#).

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For Organizations

Encouraging individuals to follow these guidelines will reduce the risk of spreading disease, whether COVID or another illness. To maximize protection in your organization:

1. Defer attendance by all sick individuals.
2. Before they return to your organization, have all individuals who should be evaluated for COVID do one of the following:
 - Test negative on a diagnostic COVID test, i.e., an RT-PCR test;
 - Get a doctor's note confirming that they can safely return to their normal activities;
 - Wait until their symptoms are resolving, and it has been at least 5 days after their symptoms began. Individuals who are able to return sooner than 10 days after getting sick should wear a mask through day 10 to minimize the risk of exposing others.
3. Ensure that all individuals follow public health guidelines about returning if they have COVID.
4. Encourage flexible policies that support people staying home when they are sick, so they are not discouraged from following these guidelines.

Household Member with Symptoms

For Individuals with Sick Household Members

If a household member has symptoms that could be caused by COVID, take the following steps:

1. Determine the cause of their symptoms. Be evaluated for COVID if...
 - They have **two or more** of the following symptoms:
 - Fever (either a measured, elevated temperature or if you feel feverish)
 - Chills
 - Rigors (shaking or shivering)
 - Myalgia (muscle aches and pain)
 - Headache
 - Sore throat
 - Nausea or vomiting
 - Diarrhea
 - Fatigue
 - Congestion or runny nose
 - They have at least one of the following symptoms:
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath
 - Difficulty breathing
 - New loss of taste or smell OR newly experiencing that food tastes strange or funny
 - Their doctor thinks they should be tested for COVID.
2. If a household member **has to be evaluated** for COVID...
 - **Stay home** while awaiting the results of the evaluation if...
 - You have not completed a vaccine series;
 - Your vaccines are **NOT up-to-date**.
 - If you are symptom-free **AND** you are able to consistently and correctly wear a mask when around others, you may continue your normal activities if...
 - You were **diagnosed** with COVID with a **viral test** and **recovered** within the **last 90 days**;
 - Your vaccines are **up-to-date**.
3. Stay away from the sick household member, as much as possible.
 - This may be difficult to do all the time, especially if your child is the sick individual. Do what you can to minimize exposure, including wearing a mask when able.
4. If a household member has COVID, follow all public health guidelines about when and how you can safely return to your normal activities.
 - Review the fact sheet below for an **Individual Who Has Had Close Contact with a COVID Case**.

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- You can learn more about COVID recovery and how to keep others healthy by visiting the CDC's webpage on [Quarantine and Isolation](#).
5. If a household member is evaluated and does not have COVID, you may return to normal activities. Self-monitor for symptoms and go home if you begin to feel sick.

For Organizations

Encouraging individuals to follow these guidelines will reduce the risk of spreading disease, whether COVID or another illness. To maximize protection in your organization:

1. If an individual has a household member who has to be evaluated for COVID...
 - Defer attendance for anyone whose vaccines are **NOT** [up-to-date](#), while they are awaiting results.
 - For individuals who are able to continue their normal activities, ensure they wear a mask while awaiting results.
2. If their household member is determined to have COVID, ensure that the individual follows public health guidelines about when and how they can safely return.
3. Encourage flexible policies that support people staying home as needed, so they are not discouraged from following these guidelines.

Individual Who Has Had Close Contact with a COVID Case

For Individuals Who Have Had Close Contact with a COVID Case

If you have had close contact with a COVID case:

1. Take appropriate precautions...
 - If you are symptom-free **AND** you are able to consistently and correctly wear a mask when around others, you may continue your normal activities if...
 - You were **diagnosed** with COVID with a **viral test** and **recovered** within the **last 90 days**;
 - Your vaccines are **up-to-date**.

Stay home for 10 days if you are unable to consistently and correctly wear a mask when you leave home.

- Quarantine at home for 5 days after your last close contact* if...
 - You have not completed a vaccine series;
 - Your vaccines are **NOT up-to-date**.

Stay away from others in your household as much as possible. This may be difficult to do all the time, especially if you have small children or your child is the close contact. Do what you can to minimize exposure, including wearing a mask when able.

On day 6 after your last close contact*, you may return to your normal activities if you are symptom-free **AND** you are able to consistently and correctly wear a mask when around others. Stay home for 10 days, if you are unable to consistently and correctly wear a mask when you leave home.

2. Wear a mask around others for 10 days after your last close contact* with a COVID case. Avoid activities, like eating out or going to the gym, that require you to remove your mask.
3. Avoid travel, and avoid being around people who are at high risk for severe outcomes from COVID.
4. If testing is available, take a COVID test on day 5 after your last close contact*.
 - If you are having ongoing exposure to COVID, like you could with a household member, consider taking a test more often, beginning with day 5 after your close contact began.
5. Monitor your health and be evaluated for COVID if you develop any COVID symptoms. (See previous fact sheets for a list of COVID symptoms.)

You can learn more about how to keep others healthy after exposure to COVID by visiting the CDC's webpage on [Quarantine and Isolation](#).

***NOTE:** *If you are having ongoing close contact with a COVID case, like you would if the case lives in your household and you are unable to stay apart, your last close contact would not occur until either the COVID case recovered, or the case is able to isolate away from you. Once close contact has stopped, you may begin to track the days that have passed since your last close contact.*

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For Organizations

Encouraging individuals to follow these guidelines will reduce the risk of spreading disease, whether COVID or another illness. To maximize protection in your organization:

1. If an individual has had close contact with a COVID case...
 - a. Defer attendance for individuals whose vaccines are **NOT** up-to-date, for at least 5 days after their last close contact*
 - b. Ensure all individuals consistently and correctly wear a mask for 10 days after their last close contact* with a COVID case. Support temporary adjustments that allow them to avoid activities that require them to remove their masks.
2. If testing is available, encourage all close contacts to take a test on day 5 after their last close contact*.
 - a. If an individual is having ongoing exposure to COVID and testing is available, encourage taking a test more often, beginning with day 5 after their close contact began.
3. Ensure people immediately go home if they develop illness.
4. Encourage flexible policies that support people staying home as needed, so they are not discouraged from following these guidelines.

***NOTE:** *For individuals who are having ongoing close contact with a COVID case, like could happen if the case is a member of their household, the last close contact would not occur until either the COVID case recovered, or the case is able to isolate away from the individual. Once close contact has stopped, they may begin to track the days that have passed since their last close contact.*