

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

Summary of November 15, 2021 Changes

- Updated information on how a person is exposed to COVID-19
- Updated testing, masking, and quarantine guidance for close contacts who are not yet fully vaccinated and do not have symptoms
- Updated testing, masking, and quarantine guidance for fully vaccinated close contacts who do not have symptoms
- Added guidance for people who tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 90 days and recovered and do not have symptoms
- Updated guidance for close contacts with symptoms

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. Students and staff in K-12 schools should follow the [K-12 requirements](#).

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). An infected person can [spread the virus](#) through respiratory droplets or small particles, such as those in [aerosols](#), during their infectious period; 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). People most often get exposed by a household member or through close contact with another person. 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.

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.

Symptoms of COVID-19

[Symptoms](#) of COVID-19 include fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, and new loss of taste or smell. This list does not include all possible symptoms.

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

If You're Not Yet Fully Vaccinated

You should get tested for SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19) and quarantine at home and away from others. If your first test is negative, you should get tested again 5-7 days after your last contact with the person who has COVID-19 and continue to quarantine. Wear a mask if you must be around other people inside or outside your household. Watch for symptoms for 14 days after your last contact, and if you have any [COVID-19 symptoms](#), [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?](#)

Current quarantine recommendations are to stay in quarantine for 14 days after your last contact. Certain high-risk settings or groups **should** use the 14-day quarantine option:

- People who work or stay in an acute or long-term healthcare setting.
- People who work or stay in a correctional facility.
- People who work or stay in a shelter or transitional housing.
- People who live in communal housing such as dormitories, fraternities or sororities.
- People who work in crowded work situations where physical distancing is impossible due to the nature of the work such as in a warehouse or factory.
- People who work on fishing or seafood processing vessels.

If this is not possible, stay in quarantine for 10 days after your last contact. If you have any COVID-19 symptoms during the 10 days, stay in quarantine the full 14 days and get tested.

Keep watching for symptoms until day 14.

It may be possible to end quarantine after 7 full days beginning after your last contact *if* you have been without symptoms *and* after receiving a negative result from a test (get tested no sooner than 48 hours before ending quarantine.) *This will depend on availability of testing resources.* **Keep watching for symptoms until day 14.**

Consult your local health jurisdiction to find the best option for your individual circumstances.

If You Are Fully Vaccinated

People are considered fully vaccinated:

- 2 weeks after their second dose in a 2-dose series, like the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines, or
- 2 weeks after a single-dose vaccine, like Johnson & Johnson's Janssen vaccine.

If it has been less than 2 weeks since their final dose, or if they still need to get their second dose, they are NOT fully protected. Keep taking all [prevention measures](#) until they are fully

vaccinated. COVID-19 vaccines must be authorized for emergency use, licensed, or otherwise approved by the FDA; or listed for emergency use or otherwise approved by the World Health Organization.

Fully vaccinated individuals do not need to quarantine after close contact with a person who has COVID-19, but they should get tested for SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19) 5-7 days after their last contact with the person who has COVID-19, monitor for symptoms for 14 days after their last contact, and wear a mask in public indoor spaces until receipt of a negative SARS-CoV-2 test result or for 14 days after their last contact if not tested. 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?](#) Fully vaccinated close contacts who are residents in high risk settings (for example, correctional settings and long term care facilities) are recommended to quarantine and follow any DOH setting-specific guidance or local health jurisdiction recommendation. Local health jurisdictions may use their discretion, based on considerations such as outbreak control, congregate living, and preventive measures in place, to relax or expand upon this recommendation.

If you tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 90 days and recovered before your close contact with a person with COVID-19

If you tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 90 days and recovered before coming into close contact with a person with COVID-19, you do not need to quarantine, but you should get tested for COVID-19 with an antigen test 5-7 days after your last contact with the person who has COVID-19. You should monitor for symptoms for 14 days after your last contact and wear a mask in public indoor spaces until you receive a negative SARS-CoV-2 antigen test result or for 14 days after last contact if you are not tested. If symptoms develop, consult with a healthcare provider. Close contacts who recovered from COVID-19 in the past 90 days and are residents in high risk settings (for example, correctional settings) are recommended to quarantine and follow any DOH setting-specific guidance or LHM recommendation. Local health jurisdictions may use their discretion, based on considerations such as outbreak control, congregate living, and preventive measures in place, to relax or expand upon this recommendation.

[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 SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19), 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 antigen testing product. Wear a 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](#).

Test result after symptoms began	Close contact is fully vaccinated or tested positive for COVID-19 and recovered in the past 90 days	Close contact is not fully vaccinated
Positive or not tested	Stay home until: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It has been 10 days since symptoms first appeared, AND • You have had no fever within the past 24 hours without using fever-reducing medication, AND • Your symptoms have significantly improved. 	Stay home until: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It has been 10 days since symptoms first appeared, AND • You have had no fever within the past 24 hours without using fever-reducing medication, AND • Your symptoms have significantly improved.
Negative	Stay home until: <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>Close contacts who are residents in high risk settings (for example, correctional settings) are recommended to quarantine and follow any DOH setting-specific guidance or local health jurisdiction recommendation.</p>	Resume quarantine (see I had close contact with someone who tested positive COVID-19 but I am not sick. What should I do?).

More guidance is available for [people who test positive for COVID-19](#).

Monitor your symptoms

Get medical help right away if your symptoms get worse. Before you get care, call your health care provider and tell them you have COVID-19 symptoms. Put on a face covering before you enter the healthcare facility to protect others in the waiting room and exam rooms.

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.

What should I do to keep my illness from spreading to my family and other people in the community?

- **Stay home, except to get medical care.**

- Do not go to work, school, or public areas. Avoid using public transportation, taxis, or ride sharing. Ask others to do your shopping or use a grocery delivery service.
- Call before you go to a healthcare provider and tell them you have COVID-19 or are being evaluated for COVID-19. Put on a face covering before you enter the building. These steps will help keep people in the office or waiting room from getting sick.
- **Separate yourself from other people and animals in your home.**
 - As much as possible, stay in a specific room and away from other people.
 - Use a separate bathroom, if available.
 - Wear a cloth face covering when you are around others. If you cannot wear a face covering, other people should wear a face covering or respirator when they enter your room.

A cloth face covering is anything that completely covers your mouth and nose, and fits securely on the sides of your face and under your chin. It should be made of two or more layers of tightly woven fabric with ties or straps that go around your head or behind your ears. A face shield with a drape can be used by people with developmental, behavioral, or medical conditions that prevent them from wearing a cloth face covering.
 - Guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [recommends strategies](#) to improve mask fitting to more effectively slow the spread of COVID-19. These strategies include wearing a cloth mask over a medical procedure mask, knotting the ear loops of a medical procedure mask, using a mask fitter, or using a nylon covering over a mask. In addition, DOH does not recommend the use of masks with exhalation valves or vents, or single layer bandanas and gaiters. (Respirators with exhalation valves are okay when used in accordance with guidance published by DOH and [L&I](#).)
 - Restrict contact with pets and other animals while sick. When possible, have another member of your household care for your animals. If you must care for your pet, wash your hands before and after you interact with pets and wear a face covering, if possible. See [COVID-19 and Animals](#) for more information.
 - Don't share personal items with people or pets, including dishes, drinking glasses, cups, utensils, towels, or bedding.
- **Maintain 6 feet of physical distance** from others at all times, even if using a mask.
- **Clean your hands often.** Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that has at least 60% alcohol. Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands.
- **Cover your coughs and sneezes with tissues.** Throw away the used tissues and then wash your hands.
- **Clean "high-touch" surfaces at least once a day or as often as determined is necessary,** including counters, tabletops, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, toilets, phones, keyboards, tablets, and bedside tables. Use a household cleaning spray or wipe and follow the directions on the label.

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.