What to do if you are a close contact of someone with COVID-19

Close contact means being within six feet (or two meters), for a total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period, of someone with COVID-19 during their infectious period. The infectious period starts two days before any symptoms began – or for people without any symptoms, two days before the day they got tested – and continues until they are recovered.

If you had COVID-19 or are fully vaccinated, you may not need to get tested or quarantine. Find out more about testing and quarantine for close contacts.

Quarantine at home, get tested, and watch for symptoms for 14 days:

Quarantine means you need to stay home and away from other people for 14 days. This means you can’t do any activities outside of your home, like going to school, work, or out to do errands. You can go outside for exercise, like for a walk or a bike ride, only if you don’t have any symptoms, are alone in an uncrowded place, can stay at least 6 feet from others at all times, and can wear a mask at all times.

Get tested twice – as soon as two days after you were exposed to the person with COVID-19, and again seven days after the exposure. If your first test is negative, remain in quarantine and follow guidance from the Health Department. If this test is positive, follow isolation guidance from the Health Department. It’s okay to leave home for testing. Find out where to get tested.

Getting tested right away means you can find out if you have COVID-19 early. This also helps the Health Department find other people who have COVID-19 more quickly. Getting tested before day 7 cannot be used to end quarantine. Read more about “When you can end quarantine” on the next page.

Here’s what you need to do to quarantine:

- Day 0 is the day you were last in contact with the person who has COVID-19.
- Stay home, except to get tested, for urgent medical care, or if you feel unsafe at home. Wear a face mask if you need to leave home.
- Call ahead before visiting a health care provider or emergency department and tell them you are quarantining because you are a close contact of someone with COVID-19.
- Watch for symptoms, even if mild, of cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fever, chills, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, or diarrhea.
- If possible, stay in a specific room in your home and use a separate bathroom.
- Stay at least 6 feet away from others in your home at all times.
- Wear a mask if you’re in any room with other people, unless you have trouble breathing. Don’t share household items.

See the timeline from when you were exposed to when you can end quarantine.
Daily cleaning and washing:

- Clean and disinfect surfaces in your home. As much as possible, if you are staying in a separate room and using a separate bathroom, clean them yourself, and have someone else clean the other areas of the home.
- Thoroughly wash household items, like utensils, after using them.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water aren’t available.

If at any point you start to feel sick or you develop symptoms:

- Call your health care provider. Let them know you are quarantining at home because you are a close contact of someone with COVID-19.
- If you’re having a medical emergency, call 9-1-1 or go to the hospital.
- If you have mild illness, treat your symptoms at home by getting plenty of rest, drinking plenty of fluids, and taking fever-reducing medication if needed.
- If you test positive for COVID-19, you will be contacted again by a Health Department Contact Tracer and they will give you guidance on how to start isolation.

If you don’t have a health care provider, call 2-1-1 to be connected to care, or contact the nearest federally qualified health center or one of Vermont's free & referral clinics.

When to get medical care immediately:

Get medical care immediately if you have trouble breathing, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion, inability to wake or stay awake, or changes in color on your lips, gums, face, around the eyes, or nails. Tell your health care provider or 9-1-1 that you are quarantining at home because you are a close contact of someone with COVID-19.

When you can end quarantine:

If after 14 days you still don’t have symptoms, you may end your quarantine. You have the option to end quarantine early if you:

- get tested on or after day 7 and get a negative test result. The test should be for a current infection (like a PCR test), except it should not be an antigen test (also known as a rapid test), and
- did not have any symptoms of COVID-19. You must continue to monitor yourself for symptoms for the full 14 days.

If you are an unvaccinated inpatient or an unvaccinated resident of a long-term care facility, you do not have the option to test out of quarantine early.

Find more information at: healthvermont.gov/contact-tracing