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 are a health care worker, please see COVID-19: What to do if you are a health care worker.

Close contacts who had COVID-19 or are fully vaccinated may not need to quarantine. Read more.

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 or recreation.

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 initial test is negative, you will need to remain in quarantine and follow guidance from the Health Department. If this test is positive, you must follow isolation guidance from the Health Department. Find out where to get tested. It’s okay to leave home for testing.

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. Find out how to end quarantine with a test on or after day 7.

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. Find out what to do if you cannot avoid close contact with someone you take care of or with someone who takes care of you.
- 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 you will need to begin 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:

If you have trouble breathing, chest pain, confusion, or changes in color on your lips, gums, face, around the eyes, or nails, seek medical care immediately. 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.

If you have not had symptoms, you have the option to get a PCR test on or after day 7. Remain in quarantine until you get your results. If the results are negative, and you still don’t have any symptoms, you can end your quarantine. Continue to monitor yourself for symptoms for the full 14 days. Staff and residents in certain group living settings must complete the full 14-day quarantine.

Proof of a negative test should not be required from your employer to return to work. The Health Department does not provide letters indicating that you can return to work. Find out more about returning to work safely.

Find more information:

- Close contacts and contact tracing web page
- Frequently asked questions about quarantine
- Tips about quarantining when you share a home