What to do if you test positive for COVID-19

Isolation is when people with COVID-19 stay home and away from other people, until they have recovered. This is to prevent further spread of the virus.

Isolate at home:

Most people with mild illness can recover at home. While there is no specific treatment for COVID-19, you should get plenty of rest, drink plenty of fluids, and take fever-reducing medication if needed.

- Stay home, except 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 isolating because you have COVID-19.
- As much as possible, stay in a specific room in your home and use a separate bathroom.
- Stay at least six feet (or two meters) 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.
- Have someone else care for your pets. A small number of pets have been reported to be sick with COVID-19. People with the virus should limit contact with animals until more information is known. If you need to care for your pet, wear a mask and wash your hands before and after.
- Stay connected with others by using technology to communicate with friends and family.

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.

See the timeline from when you were exposed to when you can end isolation if you had symptoms or did not have symptoms.

Daily cleaning and washing:

- Clean and disinfect surfaces in your separate room and bathroom. Have someone else clean the other areas of your 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.

When to get medical care immediately:

If you have difficulty 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 have COVID-19 and are isolating at home.
Your close contacts will need to quarantine:

People who were in close contact with you during your infectious period will need to quarantine for 14 days by following the steps in 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. Close contact does not mean being more than six feet away in the same indoor environment for a short period of time, walking by, or briefly being in the same room with someone.
- An infectious period starts two days before your symptoms began – or if you did not have any symptoms, two days before the day you got tested – and continues until you are recovered.
- Your close contacts will need to get tested as soon as they can. If they have symptoms of COVID-19, they’ll need to talk to their health care provider about where to get tested. They must quarantine and follow guidance provided by the Health Department even if this test is negative.
- If someone was a close contact of your close contact, they do not need to follow the guidelines, unless they have symptoms.

When you have recovered and can end home isolation:

You can stop home isolation when you have recovered, which means you have met the following:

If you had symptoms, you can leave home and be with others after these three things have happened (unless otherwise instructed by your health care provider):

- you have had no fever for at least 24 hours without the use of medicine that reduces fevers and
- other symptoms have improved (for example, when your cough or shortness of breath have improved) and
- at least 10 days have passed since your symptoms first appeared.

If you did not have any symptoms, you can leave home and be with others after:

- 10 days have passed since the date you had your positive test (unless otherwise instructed by your health care provider).

The decision to stop home isolation should be made in consultation with your health care provider and the Health Department.

Most people do not need a test to determine when they can be around others again. However, if your health care provider recommends testing, they will let you know when you can resume being around others based on your test results.

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 out more about what to do if you have COVID-19.