What to do if you test positive for COVID-19

People with COVID-19 can spread the virus to others. If you test positive for COVID-19, even if you are vaccinated or never have symptoms, isolate as soon as you receive your test result and then notify your close contacts. Isolation means staying home and away from other people – including the people who live with you – for at least 10 days.

Start following the guidance below on how to isolate and notify your close contacts as soon as you receive your positive test result.

You may get a call from the Health Department. If you miss the call, call us back at 802-863-7240.

Tell your health care provider that you tested positive for COVID-19. They may have guidance for you to take care of your own health. If you need to see a health care provider but don’t have one, 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.

If you are over 65 or have a high-risk medical condition and have mild to moderate symptoms, reach out to your health care provider to ask about monoclonal antibody treatment — as soon you get your positive test result. The treatment works best in the first five days, and can reduce the chance of being hospitalized by 70%. You can also get a pulse oximeter from the Health Department. This small device that clips onto your fingertip measures your pulse and oxygen levels and can help you know how sick you are.

If you took a self-test, or an at-home test, please be sure that you report your positive result to the Health Department. You can do that by choosing the option to automatically provide your results to your local health department or by filling out the Vermont COVID-19 Self-Test Result Reporting Form.

Check the Follow-up Testing Guide to understand next steps based on your test results, whether or not you have symptoms and the type of test you took.

See the timelines for people with COVID-19 who have symptoms and who never have symptoms.

Notify your close contacts:

It’s important for people in close contact with you to know that they may have been exposed to COVID-19. Especially with the more contagious Delta variant, the sooner people know they may have come into contact with the virus, the sooner they can take steps to protect themselves and to prevent further spread in the community.

Step 1 – Identify your infectious period.

The infectious period is when you can spread the virus to others. It starts the two days before you noticed any symptoms, and it continues until your isolation period ends. If you don’t have
symptoms, your infectious period starts the two days before the day you got tested and continues for 10 days (if you remain without symptoms).

**Step 2 – Make a list of your close contacts.**

Write down the names of anyone who was in close contact with you during your infectious period. For COVID-19, close contact means within 6 feet, for a combined total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period. People are considered close contacts even if you, or they, were wearing a mask.

Look at your planner, calendar, social media or photos to remember what you did and where you have been. Here are some things to think about:

- Who lives with you?
- Did you go to work or school?
- Did you get together with people (for example, had friends over your house, went to a party, ate at a restaurant, went out for drinks, went to a gym, had a playdate, volunteered)?
- Did you go to a congregate living setting (for example, long-term care facility, shelter, correctional facility)?
- Did you go to in-person appointments (for example, doctor’s or dentist’s office, hospital or another medical appointment, to the salon or barber)?
- Did you get in a car with others (for example, carpooling, Uber or Lyft) or take public transportation?
- Did you go inside a church, synagogue, mosque or other places of worship?
- Did you attend a large event (for example, a concert, wedding, funeral)?

**Step 3 – Notify your close contacts that they may have been exposed to COVID-19.**

Help protect your close contacts, and your community, by letting your close contacts know they may have been exposed to COVID-19. If you have their contact information, call, text or email them. If you were somewhere where you could have potentially exposed people you don’t know, call the location and let them know.

Provide this information to your close contacts: the date you got tested, the date you were last in contact with them, and the link to the what to do if you are a close contact web page. Use this example to cut-and-paste into an email or text message, or to say over the phone.

I have something important to share with you. I tested positive for COVID-19 on [insert date]. We spent time together on [insert date]. I wanted to let you know so you can take steps to protect yourself, and to prevent the virus from spreading any further. You can find out what you need to do at healthvermont.gov/aboutclosecontact.

Prioritize reaching out to people in higher risk groups first. This includes:

- People who live or work in a congregate living setting
- Children, teachers and staff who attend or work at a school or child care
- People over the age of 65
• People with high-risk health conditions

Reaching out to contacts can be a stressful situation for everyone involved. COVID-19 can be incredibly disruptive, and it can bring up many concerns and worries. There are lots of resources available. Find out more about coping with stress.

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 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 6 feet (or 2 meters) away from others in your home at all times.
• Wear a mask if you’re in any room with other people or pets, unless you have trouble breathing.
• Don’t share household items.
• Monitor your blood oxygen levels. People diagnosed with COVID-19 may have below-normal levels of oxygen in their blood before they feel short of breath. Finding low oxygen levels early can help you know to seek medical care sooner. This could make the disease less severe.
• If you cannot avoid close contact with people you take care of (for example, your children), then they should quarantine while you are sick. They should also quarantine for 14 days after you have recovered. Learn more about close contacts and quarantine.

How to do 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:

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 have COVID-19 and are isolating at home.
End isolation once you have recovered:

You can stop home isolation when you have recovered. This you have met the following conditions:

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 **never had 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).

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.