

Learning that a co-worker has tested positive for COVID-19 can be stressful, but there are actions you can take to stay safe. This guidance applies to most people, but more specific guidance may supersede this for employees from certain sectors, such as people who work in congregate living facilities and critical care infrastructure workers.

How will I know if my co-worker tested positive?

Your co-worker may tell you directly, your employer may tell you, or you may receive a call from the Health Department if you had possible close contact with a co-worker who tested positive.

There may be misinformation circulating and concerns about getting COVID-19 among co-workers. Remember to treat your co-workers with respect and confidentiality.

Why might the Health Department call me?

When a person tests positive for COVID-19, the Health Department contacts them to find out who they were in close contact with during their infectious period (beginning two days before the start of symptoms or two days before a positive test result for people who did not have symptoms). Close contact means being within 6 feet of each other for at least 15 minutes. The Health Department will follow up with each close contact to assess their risk for COVID-19 and provide information about staying home and the importance of getting tested.

When would I need to quarantine and stay home from work?

If you **were** in close contact with someone with COVID-19 while they were infectious, you should [quarantine](#) for 14 days. Day 0 is the last day you had contact with that person. There may be some exceptions on quarantine guidance based on your type of employment and staffing capacity. The Health Department will provide you with specific guidance and next steps to take.

You can contact your health care provider about getting tested on or after day 7 of quarantine, if you have had no symptoms. This option is not available to those who work in close congregate settings where there is a high risk of transmitting COVID-19 to vulnerable people, such as assisted living and detention facilities. If your test is negative, you may end quarantine early and go back to work.

For both close contacts and people who tested positive: Neither a negative test for COVID-19 nor a letter from the Health Department should be required from your employer to return to work. The Health Department does not provide letters indicating that you can return to work.

If you **were not** in close contact with someone with COVID-19 while they were infectious, you may go to work and you do not need to quarantine.

What else should I know about COVID-19?

- Diseases can make anyone sick regardless of their race or ethnicity. Fear and anxiety about COVID-19 can cause people to avoid or reject others even though they are not at risk for spreading the virus.

- People can spread the virus that causes COVID-19 up to two days before they have symptoms. However, some people with COVID-19 do not have any symptoms.
- COVID-19 is thought to spread through close contact from person-to-person, through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a [mask](#) when around others outside of your home.
- Stay home from work if you develop a fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion, runny nose, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea. Contact your health care provider for testing.
- Clean your hands often, either with soap and water for 20 seconds or a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid sharing items or workspaces with others and thoroughly [clean](#) workspaces prior to working and after you are done for the day.
- People who test positive should not return to work until they have completed [home isolation](#).
- Someone who has completed quarantine or has been released from isolation does not pose a risk of infection to other people.
- Areas that were used by someone who tested positive for COVID-19 can be used by other people once the areas have been [cleaned and disinfected](#). If it has been seven days since the person was in the area, additional cleaning beyond routine cleaning and disinfection is not necessary.

Where can I find more information and support?

- [Vermont's COVID-19 Website](#)
- [COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [How to Cope with Job Stress and Build Resilience During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)
- [Communities, Schools, Workplaces, and Events](#)
- [What to do if you are a close contact of someone who is diagnosed with COVID-19](#)
- [Coping With Stress](#)
- [How to Protect Yourself & Others](#)