# COVID-19: Understanding Quarantine and Isolation

This table provides a summary of COVID-19 quarantine and isolation. See below for more information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Quarantine</th>
<th>Isolation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What does it mean?</td>
<td>Staying home, monitoring your health and safely separating from others after you were recently exposed to someone with COVID-19.</td>
<td>Staying home, monitoring your health and safely separating from others when you have COVID-19 or symptoms of COVID-19.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who should do this?</td>
<td>People who either: 1. Have been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19; or 2. Recently travelled from another state or country (see below for details).</td>
<td>People who are confirmed to have COVID-19 (recent positive diagnostic test result) or have symptoms of COVID-19.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why should I do this?</td>
<td>If you are near someone with COVID-19, you are more likely to get it. Staying home can prevent spread to others. You can have and spread COVID-19 even if you do not have symptoms.</td>
<td>Staying home can prevent the spread of COVID-19 to others. You can spread COVID-19 even if you do not have symptoms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where should I stay?</td>
<td>At home or a free COVID-19 hotel.</td>
<td>At home, a health care facility or a free COVID-19 hotel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should I get tested for COVID-19?</td>
<td>Yes, get tested right away if you are a close contact or four days after traveling in another state or country (see below for details).</td>
<td>If you have symptoms and have not been tested, get tested right away. Stay isolated while waiting for your test results.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should I get medical care?</td>
<td>You should take your temperature twice daily and monitor for other symptoms. Contact your health care provider if you develop symptoms or if you are older or have a health condition that puts you at increased risk for severe COVID-19. Go to a hospital or call 911 if you have trouble breathing or another medical emergency.</td>
<td>Yes. You should take your temperature twice daily and monitor for other symptoms. Contact your health care provider to let them know of your positive test result or symptoms. Go to a hospital or call 911 if you have trouble breathing or another medical emergency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do I protect other household members?</td>
<td>Avoid contact as much as possible. Always remain at least 6 feet from others, wear a face covering whenever you are not alone in a room, and clean and disinfect your home often.</td>
<td>Avoid contact as much as possible. Always remain at least 6 feet from others, wear a face covering whenever you are not alone in a room, and clean and disinfect your home often. See here for additional tips.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can I go to school?</td>
<td>No (remote learning only).</td>
<td>No (remote learning only).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can I go to work?</td>
<td>No, except some essential workers may be able to go to work (see below for details).</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where am I allowed to go?</td>
<td>To get essential medical care (including testing) and basic needs, like groceries, if you have no other way to get them (see below for precautions you should take).</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>How long?</td>
<td>10 days after your last contact with the person who had COVID-19, or 10 days from the day you return to New York State (NYS) (see below for details).</td>
<td>For at least 10 days from when your symptoms started or, if you had no symptoms, 10 days from when you were tested (see below for full isolation criteria).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Frequently Asked Questions

What is the definition of close contact?
A close contact is someone who has been within 6 feet for at least 10 minutes over a 24-hour period of someone who has COVID-19. In most cases, all people living with someone who has COVID-19 are close contacts. Close contacts may also include home health aides, coworkers, classmates, or friends or families you have spent time with.

Who must quarantine due to travel?
NYS requires visitors and returning New Yorkers who were in the following places to quarantine upon arrival to NYS:
- A U.S. state or territory except Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Pennsylvania or Vermont.
- Countries or territories with a Level 2 or higher travel warning.

For more information, visit nyc.gov/health/covidtravel and coronavirus.health.ny.gov/covid-19-travel-advisory.

How do I figure out the date my quarantine ends?
If you are a close contact, you must quarantine for 10 days from your last close contact to the person who has COVID-19. Your employer may require you to stay out of work for a different period of time based on NYS requirements for specific industries.

For travel quarantine, you must quarantine for 10 days from when you were last in a state or country subject to travel quarantine, unless you meet NYS travel quarantine testing requirements (see below).

If you develop symptoms of COVID-19 or test positive while in quarantine, you need to start isolation.

If I test negative for COVID-19, can I end quarantine early?
According to NYS requirements, if you are in quarantine because you are a close contact of someone with COVID-19, you cannot end quarantine early with a negative test result. It is possible that you tested negative because you have not yet developed COVID-19 at the time of testing. It may take several days to develop COVID-19 from when you were exposed.

If you are in travel quarantine, testing may shorten quarantine. Per NYS requirements, travel quarantine is for 10 days unless you receive two negative diagnostic COVID-19 tests, as follows:
- Test within 72 hours prior to arrival to New York, and
- Test four days after arrival.

If I test positive for antibodies, do I still need to quarantine if I am a close contact or recently traveled?
Yes. Recent evidence shows that it is possible to get COVID-19 again. We do not know how long people may be immune to the virus after infection and who may be at higher risk of getting infected again.
Who can go to work while in quarantine?
Close contacts who are essential workers, as defined by NYS, may go to work while in quarantine under limited circumstances. If you think this applies to you, please contact your employer as there are specific steps they must follow. People allowed to work during quarantine must follow additional requirements such as wearing a face covering at all times while at work and quarantining while not at work.

For travel quarantine, essential workers can go to work if certain requirements are met. Visit the NYS travel advisory website for more information.

Someone in my home was told to quarantine due to an exposure outside the home (such as school or work), does that mean I have to quarantine too?
No. As a contact of a contact, you do not need to quarantine. You should monitor closely for symptoms and avoid close contact with the person who is quarantining, as it is possible they have COVID-19 and do not know it. If the person in your home develops COVID-19, you will likely be a close contact and need to quarantine.

How do I figure out the date my isolation period ends?
If you have symptoms of COVID-19 and either tested positive for COVID-19 or did not get tested, you can leave your home when all the following are true:
- It has been at least 10 days since your symptoms started.
- You have not had a fever for the prior 24 hours without use of fever-reducing drugs.
- Your overall illness has improved.

If you never had symptoms but tested positive, stay home for 10 days from the date you were tested.

Your health care provider may recommend a longer period of isolation due to underlying health conditions or based on the course of your illness. Also, your employer may require you to stay out of work for a different period of time based on NYS requirements for specific industries.

You are considered no longer contagious at the end of the isolation period. You do not need to show a negative test result to end isolation. It is possible to get COVID-19 again so it is important to continue physical distancing, wearing a face covering and practicing healthy hand hygiene when outside your home.

If I test negative for COVID-19, do I still need to isolate?
If you have symptoms, you must isolate while waiting for your test result. If your test result confirms you have COVID-19, you must complete the full isolation period described above. If you are not yet confirmed to have COVID-19 and you test negative by a molecular diagnostic test, you can stop isolating if you have not had a fever in the past 24 hours without use of fever-reducing drugs. If you test negative by an antigen or antibody test, you must continue to isolate.

To learn more about the different kinds of COVID-19 tests, see COVID-19: Testing Frequently Asked Questions. If you are not sure what kind of test you had, check with your health care provider.
If I previously had COVID-19 and test positive again, do I still need to isolate?
If you were confirmed with COVID-19 (positive diagnostic test) in the past 90 days, you do not need to isolate again if you remain without symptoms but have another positive COVID-19 test. This is because many people who had COVID-19 test positive for weeks or even months after infection, but they are no longer contagious. However, if you develop symptoms after recovering from COVID-19, you should contact your health care provider. It is possible to get COVID-19 again.

How do I monitor my health while in isolation or quarantine?
You should take your temperature twice daily and monitor for symptoms such as shortness of breath, cough, and loss of taste of smell or taste. If you have a fingertip oxygen meter (pulse oximeter), you can use that as well (see here for instructions). Call your health care provider if you develop symptoms or if your symptoms worsen. This is especially important if you are an older adult, pregnant or have health conditions that put you at increased risk for severe COVID-19 illness. Use a telephone or telemedicine when possible. Get tested for COVID-19 if you have not been tested already.

What if I have to leave home while in isolation or quarantine for essential medical care or supplies?
If you need to leave home:
• Wear a face covering and stay at least 6 feet away from others.
• Wash your hands with soap and water before going out and use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer while outside.
• Avoid other people as much as possible — walk if you can and do not enter crowded stores or transportation.

Can I get paid leave from work for isolation or quarantine?
Contact your employer for questions about their leave policy. You may qualify for paid leave under the NYS Paid Family Leave Act, which apples to isolation and quarantine, including staying home to care for a minor child who has to isolate or quarantine. Most travel-related quarantine is not eligible for paid leave under the Paid Family Leave Act. Visit paidfamilyleave.ny.gov/covid19 for more information.

Additional Resources:
• For information on COVID-19, visit nyc.gov/health/coronavirus and cdc.gov/coronavirus.
• To find a testing site, visit nyc.gov/covidtest. Many sites offer free testing.
• To find a health care provider, call 844-NYC-4NYC (844-692-4692).
• To book a COVID-19 hotel, visit Take Care or call 844-NYC-4NYC (844-692-4692).
• If you have questions, call 212-COVID19 (212-268-4319).

The NYC Health Department may change recommendations as the situation evolves. 12.31.20