

## Health Advisory: Quarantine Duration for SARS-CoV-2 Contacts

Minnesota Department of Health, Mon, Dec 7 14:00 CST 2020

### Action Steps

**Local and tribal health department:** Please forward to hospitals, clinics, urgent care centers, emergency departments, and convenience clinics in your jurisdiction.

**Hospitals, clinics and other facilities:** Please forward to infection preventionists, infectious disease physicians, emergency department staff, hospitalists, primary care clinicians, and all other health care providers who might see patients with COVID-19.

**Health care providers:**

- Advise patients (“contacts”) who have been in close prolonged contact (within six feet for at least 15 minutes within a 24 hour period) and remain asymptomatic to enter quarantine based on the following options.
  - 14-day quarantine period remains the CDC recommendation for the greatest protection against spread of SARS-CoV-2
  - Minimum seven-day quarantine with negative RT-PCR test collected on day 5 or later
  - 10-day quarantine with no test

Exceptions are as follows:

- 14-day quarantine for individuals exposed to a SARS-CoV-2 household member
- 14-day quarantine for residents of congregate care and congregate living settings
- 14-day work exclusion for individuals who work in health care, congregate care, or congregate living. Community activities for this group can be resumed based on options above.
- Advise patients to continue symptom monitoring until day 14 post-exposure.
- Advise patients who develop signs or symptoms of COVID-19 to isolate and be tested by RT-PCR for SARS-CoV-2

### Background

Quarantine is used to separate someone who might have been exposed to a person with COVID-19 from other people until the period for potential illness development has passed. Quarantine helps prevent spread of disease that can occur before a person knows they have been infected. Because it can take up to 14 days for people to develop COVID-19 after an exposure to a positive person, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) have recommended that people stay out of work and out of the community for 14 days after a known exposure. Up to 40% of people with COVID-19 never develop symptoms, and adhering to quarantine can prevent movement of asymptomatic positive individuals in the community. Because individuals can develop COVID-19 up to 14 days after an exposure, any quarantine shorter than 14 days might lead to increased spread of the virus that causes COVID-19, SARS-CoV-2, in the community. However, quarantine can be a burden to the socioeconomic and mental health of

exposed individuals. Options to reduce the length of quarantine have been provided by CDC for state health departments to consider. These options are intended to balance reduced burden to individuals and society against a limited potential to increase virus spread. Reduced burden is expected to also increase compliance with recommended quarantine duration.

CDC has published additional detail on reduced quarantine, including estimates of the residual post-quarantine transmission risk, on their website (see link below).

## Testing after COVID-19 Exposure

MDH recommends testing for individuals who:

- Have experienced close prolonged contact (within six feet for at least 15 minutes within a 24 hour period) with a person who has COVID-19
- Had direct exposure to respiratory droplets from a person with COVID-19
- Have traveled out of state
- Have attended an event at which SARS-CoV-2 transmission was known to occur

Individuals should be tested approximately 5-7 days after the date of exposure. Exposed individuals (“contacts”) remain a priority group for testing.

## Updated General Quarantine Recommendations

MDH recommends that the following groups of individuals enter into quarantine:

- People who were within 6 feet of someone contagious with COVID-19 for 15 minutes or more, including people who live in the same household
- People who had direct physical or intimate contact (e.g., kissing, hugging, other types physical contact)
- People who provide care to someone with COVID-19 at home
- People with direct exposure to respiratory droplets from a person contagious with COVID-19
- Individuals who have traveled out of state (except for crossing borders for work, study, medical care or personal safety and security), while Minnesota Executive Order 20-99 is in place

Contacts with no signs or symptoms of COVID-19 may return to community activities following either of the reduced quarantine periods described below. These options are not intended for individuals who were exposed to a SARS-CoV-2 positive household member, and individuals who work or live in a health care or congregate living setting (see following sections). The exposure date should be considered day zero, with the following day considered the first day of quarantine.

- The duration of quarantine may be reduced to ten days if the contact remains without signs or symptoms of COVID-19, regardless of whether a negative test result has been acquired. Return to community activities may occur on day 11.
- The duration of quarantine may be reduced to a minimum of seven days with a negative SARS-CoV-2 RT-PCR test that is collected no sooner than five days post-exposure. Return to community activities may occur as early as day eight but cannot occur until the negative

test result is obtained. Because of variable laboratory turnaround time, return to activities might not be possible until after day eight.

- A 14-day quarantine must be implemented for individuals who are exposed to a SARS-CoV-2 positive household member, because household contact results in higher likelihood of transmission and time of last exposure may be difficult to determine with certainty, particularly if there are multiple exposed or infected persons in the household. Others who wish to minimize the risk of possible transmission of SARS CoV-2 to others, should also observe a 14-day quarantine.
- Regardless of the quarantine duration, contacts must self-monitor for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 through day 14. If signs or symptoms of COVID-19 develop at any time during the 14-day period, the individual should seek testing and isolate at home.

## Updated Recommendations for Individuals Who Work in High-Risk Settings

Because any option to shorten quarantine risks being less effective than 14-day quarantine, a reduced quarantine is not recommended for contacts who work in settings at high risk for morbidity and mortality caused by SARS-CoV-2 transmission. Individuals who work in a health care, congregate care, or congregate living setting should remain out of work for 14 days but may return to community activities based on the quarantine options above. Contacts must self-monitor for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 through day 14. If signs or symptoms develop at any time during the 14-day period, the individual should seek testing and isolate at home.

Health care workers and facility leadership should refer to existing MDH recommendations to guide return to work.

- [MDH: COVID-19 Recommendations for Health Care Workers](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/hcwrecs.pdf)  
(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/hcwrecs.pdf>)

## Recommendations for Individuals Residing in High-Risk Settings

A 14-day quarantine continues to be recommended for contacts who are residing in a health care, congregate care, or congregate living setting (such as a long-term care facility, assisted living facility, group home, correctional facility or shelter). Monitoring for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 must occur through day 14. If signs or symptoms develop at any time during the 14-day period, testing and isolation are indicated.

In the event that additional information leads to future quarantine changes for these populations, please continue to monitor setting-specific MDH COVID-19 recommendations.

## For More Information

- CDC: Options to Reduce Quarantine for Contacts of Persons with SARS-CoV-2 Infection Using Symptom Monitoring and Diagnostic Testing  
(<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/more/scientific-brief-options-to-reduce-quarantine.html>)
- [MDH: COVID-19 Testing](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/testsites/index.html)  
(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/testsites/index.html>)

HEALTH ADVISORY: QUARANTINE DURATION FOR SARS-COV-2 CONTACTS

- MDH: Close Contacts and Tracing: COVID-19  
(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/close.html>)
- Call MDH at 651-201-5414 or 877-676-5414.

A copy of this HAN is available at: [MDH Health Alert Network](http://www.health.state.mn.us/han)  
(<http://www.health.state.mn.us/han>)

The content of this message is intended for public health and health care personnel and response partners who have a need to know the information to perform their duties..