

February 11, 2021

Quarantine Guidance: What to do if you were exposed to someone with COVID-19

COVID-19 is a respiratory disease caused by a new virus called SARS-CoV-2. The most common symptoms of the disease are fever, cough, and shortness of breath. Other symptoms may also include fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, or diarrhea. Most people with COVID-19 will have mild disease, but some people will get sicker and may need to be hospitalized. If you have contracted the virus, symptoms may develop within 2 to 14 days from exposure. Unless precautions are taken, your health is at risk, and other people may possibly contract this disease from you.

You may be contacted by the Georgia Department of Public Health if we have determined that you have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 or if a close contact of yours supplied your information because they tested positive for COVID-19. In order to prevent the spread of disease, and help advise you if you do develop symptoms of COVID-19, please respond to the phone call from public health. Additionally, if you are reviewing this information online because you know, or believe, that you are a close contact of a COVID19 case but have not yet been contact by DPH, please follow the guidance below.

It is very important for your own safety and for the safety of others that you monitor your health for 14 days from your last possible exposure to COVID-19. The time period that you must remain at home, avoid congregate settings and public activities, and practice social distancing will depend on your situation. Please review the details below to determine your requirements for quarantine. You are required to cooperate fully with all state and federal public health authorities, including the Georgia Department of Public Health, and to follow the measures outlined below. The Georgia Administrative Order for Public Health Control Measures can be found here: <https://dph.georgia.gov/administrative-orders>.

Quarantine for Individuals Not Vaccinated for COVID-19

If you are not sick, you agree to monitor your health for symptoms of COVID-19 during the 14 days following the last time you were in close contact with a sick person with COVID-19. A list of these symptoms can be found under “COVID-19 Testing” below. Monitoring your health includes checking your temperature twice a day and watching for symptoms for 14 days. If you develop symptoms for COVID-19 at any time, you should follow the guidance in the section below titled “What should I do if I am a close contact to someone with COVID-19 and get sick?”

You will quarantine yourself at home except in case of emergency or to be tested for COVID-19. **The recommended time period for quarantine is 14 days, but you may be able to leave quarantine prior to that if certain criteria are met:**

- If you **live in a congregate setting***, you should remain in quarantine for the full 14 days since your last known exposure, even if you remain asymptomatic.
- If you **do NOT live in a congregate setting***:
 - **You may test out of quarantine any day after 7 full days have passed** since your most recent exposure occurred, if you fulfill all **THREE** of the following criteria:
 - Do not experience any symptoms during your monitoring period,
 - **Are tested** for COVID-19,
 - The test should be a diagnostic test (PCR or antigen). It is preferred that the specimen for your test is collected no more than 48 hours before the time of planned quarantine discontinuation, however, it should not be collected before day 5 of your quarantine period.
 - Receive a negative result,
 - You may not discontinue quarantine until you have completed a minimum of 7 full days since your most recent exposure, even if you receive your negative test result earlier. If your result is positive, you must follow DPH isolation guidance <https://dph.georgia.gov/isolation-contact>
 - **If you are unable to be tested for COVID-19 during your quarantine period, you may discontinue quarantine any day after day 10 if you do not experience any symptoms during your monitoring period.**
- If you discontinue quarantine prior to 14 days, you should continue to monitor your health and follow mitigation strategies until 14 days after your most recent exposure and **isolate immediately if symptoms develop**. Mitigation strategies that should be practiced include correct and consistent mask use, social distancing, hand and cough hygiene, environmental cleaning and disinfection, avoiding crowds, and ensuring adequate indoor ventilation.

** Congregate settings include long term care facilities, jails, prisons, shelters, etc. Dormitories are not typically considered a congregate setting.*

Note: A person who has clinically recovered from COVID-19 and then is identified as a contact of a new case within 3 months of symptom onset or first positive test of their most recent illness does not need to be quarantined as discussed in this document. However, if a person is identified as a contact of a new case 3 months or more after symptom onset or first positive test, they should follow quarantine recommendations for contacts.

Quarantine for Vaccinated Individuals

If you are fully vaccinated for COVID-19 with an exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 and you are NOT an inpatient or resident in a healthcare facility, you are not required to quarantine if you meet all three criteria below:

- Are fully vaccinated for COVID-19 (i.e., it has been greater than 2 weeks following receipt of your second dose in a 2-dose series, or it has been greater than 2 weeks following receipt of one dose of a single-dose vaccine),
- It has been less than 3 months since you were fully vaccinated,
- Do not experience any symptoms since your current COVID-19 exposure

If you meet these three criteria which means you do not need to quarantine, you should still monitor yourself for symptoms of COVID-19 for 14 days following a suspect or confirmed exposure. If you develop symptoms for COVID-19, you should follow the guidance in the section below titled “What should I do if I am a close contact to someone with COVID-19 and get sick?” In addition, vaccinated persons should continue to follow all other DPH guidance to protect themselves and others, including wearing a mask, social distancing, avoiding crowds, avoiding poorly ventilated spaces, covering coughs and sneezes, and washing hands often.

If you do NOT meet all 3 of the above criteria, you should follow quarantine guidance in the section above (“Quarantine for Individuals Not Vaccinated Against COVID-19”) after exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19.

If you are fully vaccinated for COVID-19 with an exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 and you ARE an inpatient or resident in a healthcare facility, you should follow quarantine guidance in the section above (“Quarantine for Individuals Not Vaccinated Against COVID-19”) after exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19.

If you have questions about the COVID-19 vaccine, please visit <https://dph.georgia.gov/covid-vaccine> or call our COVID-19 vaccination hotline at (888) 357-0169.

Considerations During Quarantine

- If possible, stay away from other people living in your home, especially those who are at high risk for getting very sick from COVID-19: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/index.html>
- When you are contacted by public health, enroll in active monitoring. Through active monitoring, you will report your temperature and any symptoms to the Georgia Department of Public Health each day, either by responding to a text message or calling 1-888-357-0169 if you are unable to text.
- If you have not been contacted by public health, but feel you have been exposed to COVID-19, please call 1-888-357-0169.
- If you are a health care provider, emergency medical services worker, first responder, or other critical infrastructure worker, you may continue to work, in consultation with your

workplace occupational health program and if necessary to ensure adequate staffing, if you have no symptoms, wear a mask while on duty, and remain at home at all other times. Please see more information at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/critical-infrastructure-sectors.html>

COVID-19 Testing

You should obtain a test for COVID-19 at least once during your quarantine. The test should be a diagnostic test (PCR or antigen). It is preferred that the sample is not collected more than 48 hours prior to the planned end of your quarantine period, but should not be collected before day 5 of your quarantine. As a reminder, the earliest timeframe you can leave quarantine is after 7 full days have passed since your most recent exposure. You should obtain a test earlier in your quarantine if you experience any of the following symptoms:

- Fever (measured temperature above 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit, or you feel feverish)
- Chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

Call your local health department to schedule testing. You can find contact information for your health department here: <https://dph.georgia.gov/covidtesting>. If you develop symptoms of COVID-19 at any point during your quarantine period, please also follow the guidance below “What should I do if I am a close contact to someone with COVID-19 and get sick?”

If you seek a COVID-19 test during your quarantine, and you have not received results by day 14 of your quarantine, it is recommended that you do not return to work or school until those results are available. If your results are still pending after a 14-day quarantine is complete, and you decide to return to school or work, we recommend that you take extra care with prevention measures to avoid exposure to others in case your test result comes back as positive.

If you receive a positive COVID-19 test regardless of your symptom status, you must follow DPH isolation guidelines <https://dph.georgia.gov/isolation-contact>.

How may I have been exposed?

You generally need to be in close contact with a sick person to get infected. Close contact includes:

- Living in the same household as a sick person with COVID-19 and you are unable to maintain 6 feet separation at all times;
- Caring for a sick person with COVID-19;
- Being within 6 feet of a sick person with COVID-19 for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period*; OR,
- Being in direct contact with secretions from a sick person with COVID-19 (e.g., being coughed on, kissing, sharing utensils, etc.) for any amount of time.

*Recommendations may vary on the length of time of exposure, but a cumulative total of 15 minutes of close exposure can be used as an operational definition. There is not enough data currently available to know the exact duration or length of time required to result in infection. Longer exposure time likely increases exposure risk; however, the type of interaction (e.g., did the infected person cough directly in another person's face or did the infected person engage in high-exertion exercise, singing or shouting with others) and other environmental factors (e.g., crowding, adequacy of ventilation, whether exposure was indoors or outdoors) remain important in determining exposure. Individuals who are unable to maintain social distance from others throughout the day (e.g., individuals have multiple exposures to a case and either are unable to calculate total time exposed or exposure equals or exceed 15 minutes in total) will be considered a close contact. In addition, because the general public has not received training on proper selection and use of masks, such as an N95 or a cloth mask, the determination of close contact should generally be made irrespective of whether the contact was wearing a mask. If there are questions Public Health will perform a risk assessment to determine who is considered a close contact if the duration or type of contact is in question.

What should I do if I am a close contact to someone with COVID-19 and get sick?

If you develop symptoms of COVID-19 (even if your symptoms are very mild), you must stay at home and away from other people.

- Call 911 immediately if you believe you are experiencing a medical emergency. You must inform 911 that you may be sick with COVID-19 and wear a face covering.
- If it is not an emergency, but you are sick and require medical care, please contact your primary care doctor, an urgent care clinic, or your local federally qualified healthcare center.
- If you are mildly ill and do not require medical care, you can schedule testing by calling your local health department. You can find contact information for your health department here: <https://dph.georgia.gov/covidtesting>
- In order to prevent spreading COVID-19 it is critical that you follow the isolation instructions found here: <https://dph.georgia.gov/isolation-contact>
- The information provided here is not intended or implied to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment.

Return to Work and School/Child Care Guidance After Exposure or Illness

- If you are returning to work after exposure to COVID-19, please follow the guidance above to determine when your quarantine will end. **If you become sick** and:
 - you are a Healthcare Worker please follow guidance from DPH <https://dph.georgia.gov/document/document/dph-return-work-guidance/download>
 - you do not work in a healthcare setting, please follow guidance from DPH <https://dph.georgia.gov/document/document/dph-covid-19-return-work-guidance-after-covid-19-illness-or-exposure-persons-not/download>
- If you are returning to school or child care after exposure or illness, please follow guidance from DPH <https://dph.georgia.gov/document/document/return-school-guidance/download>

CDC guidance: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html>

Contact information for the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH): 1-866-PUB-HLTH (782-4584)