

# COVID-19 Contact Tracing / Quarantine

## Summary of COVID-19 Specific Practices

- Contact tracing will be conducted for **close contacts** of any individual within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes (Alaska uses 10 minutes) of **laboratory-confirmed or probable COVID-19 patients**.
- Remote communications for the purposes of case investigation and contact tracing should be prioritized; in-person communication may be considered only after remote options have been exhausted.
- Testing is recommended for all close contacts of **confirmed or probable COVID-19 patients**.
- Those contacts who test positive (symptomatic or asymptomatic) should be **managed as a confirmed COVID-19 case**.
- Asymptomatic contacts testing negative should self-quarantine **for 14 days from their last exposure** (i.e., close encounter with confirmed or probable COVID-19 case)
- If testing is not available, **symptomatic** close contacts should self-isolate and be **managed as a probable COVID-19 case**.
- If testing is not available, **asymptomatic** close contacts should self-quarantine and be monitored for 14 days after their last exposure, with linkage to clinical care for those who develop symptoms.

For COVID-19, a close contact is defined as any individual who was within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes (Alaska uses 10 minutes) starting from 2 days before illness onset (or, for asymptomatic patients, 2 days prior to positive specimen collection) until the time the patient is isolated.

The public health evaluation of close contacts to patients with laboratory-confirmed or probable COVID-19 may vary depending on the exposure setting. Contacts in special populations and/or congregate settings require additional considerations and may need handoff to a senior health department investigator or special team. Additional guidance on managing these contacts can be found in Outbreak Investigations.

## Close Contact Evaluation and Monitoring Priorities

In jurisdictions with testing capacity, symptomatic and asymptomatic close contacts to patients with confirmed and probable COVID-19 should be evaluated and monitored. For areas with insufficient testing support and/or limited public health resources, the following evaluation and monitoring hierarchy ([box4](#)) can be used to help guide prioritization. The hierarchy is based on the assumption that if close contacts listed in Priority 1 become infected, they could potentially expose many people, those at higher risk for severe disease, or critical infrastructure workers. If close contacts in Priority 2 become infected, they may be at higher risk for severe disease, so prompt notification, monitoring, and linkage to needed medical and support services is important.

# COVID-19 Contact Tracing / Quarantine

When prioritizing close contacts to evaluate and monitor, jurisdictions should be guided by the local characteristics of disease transmission, demographics, and public health and healthcare system capacity. Some states require mandatory testing for specific circumstances. Local decisions depend on local guidance and circumstances.

## Testing and Quarantine/Isolation Instructions

- Close contacts **with symptoms** should immediately self-isolate and be referred for testing and medical care. Contacts with no primary healthcare provider will need linkage to telemedicine or phone consultation.
- Close contacts **with no symptoms** will be asked to self-quarantine for **14 days from their last potential exposure**. *The last potential exposure would initially be determined by the case investigator.*
- If resources permit, jurisdictions should arrange for the testing of all close contacts, as appropriate.
  - If positive, the contact will be referred to a case investigator.
  - If negative, asymptomatic close contacts should continue to self-quarantine for a full 14 days after last exposure and follow all recommendations of public health authorities.
  - If negative, symptomatic close contacts should continue to self-quarantine and follow all recommendations of public health authorities. A second test and additional medical consultation may be needed if symptoms do not improve.
  - If testing is not available, symptomatic close contacts should be advised to self-isolate and be managed as a probable case. *Self-isolation is recommended for people with probable or confirmed COVID-19 who have mild illness and are able to recover at home.*
- Contacts should be educated about COVID-19 symptoms to monitor for and be instructed to promptly report any new symptoms to public health authorities and seek medical care when **necessary**.
- **CDC guidance** is available on critical infrastructure workers who may have had exposure to a person with suspected or confirmed COVID-19. To ensure continuity of operations of essential functions, CDC advises that critical infrastructure workers may be permitted to continue working following potential exposure to COVID-19, provided they remain asymptomatic and additional precautions are implemented to protect them and the community. Any decisions should be made in the context of local circumstances.
- **CDC guidance** is also available on asymptomatic healthcare providers with a recognized COVID-19 exposure. They might be permitted to work in a crisis capacity strategy to address staffing shortages if they wear a facemask for source control for 14 days after the exposure. Any decisions should be made in the context of local circumstances.

# COVID-19 Contact Tracing / Quarantine

## Sample Instructions for Close Contacts

- **Self-quarantine**, preferably at home, until 14 days after last potential exposure and maintain social distance (at least 6 feet) from others at all times.
- Follow **CDC guidance** on self-quarantine.
- Self-monitor daily for **symptoms** [*NOTE: Include instructions on how close contacts can report symptoms to the health department and agreed upon reporting times.*]
  - If you have a thermometer, check and record your temperature twice a day.
  - Contact a healthcare provider immediately if you:
    - Feel feverish or have a temperature of 100.4°F or higher
    - Develop a cough or shortness of breath
    - Develop mild symptoms like sore throat, muscle aches, tiredness, or diarrhea
  - Avoid contact with **people at higher risk for severe illness** (unless they live in the same home and had same exposure as you).

Follow **CDC guidance** if you develop symptoms.

For more detailed information [contract tracing for COVID-19](#) visit:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/contact-tracing/contact-tracing-plan/contact-tracing.html>

Information sourced from the CDC & prepared by:

Susan Pridgen-Webb RN BSN

Public Health Nurse III

Juneau Public Health Center