

SOMEONE IN YOUR HOME MIGHT HAVE COVID-19

Figuring out when to return to school, daycare or work can be very complicated if someone in your home is exposed to or diagnosed with COVID-19. Critical factors that affect timing are whether or not the person exposed or diagnosed is able to isolate from the rest of the family/household and the vaccination status of family members.

A few important terms:

Isolation – You isolate when you have been infected with the virus (test positive), even if you don't have symptoms. The updated recommendation for COVID-19 is to isolate for at least 5 days. You must be fever free for 24 hours (without any fever-reducing medication) and symptoms should be improving. If there is still fever, new symptoms develop, or other symptoms are not improving, then isolation continues until fever free 24 hours and symptoms are improving. Anyone sick or infected should separate from others, stay in a specific "sick room" or area, and use a separate bathroom (if available). Anyone who ends isolation in less than 10 days is to be very careful for the next 5 days. Mask wearing and staying 6 feet away from people when not wearing a mask (like when eating) is critical during this time.

Quarantine – You quarantine when you might have been exposed to the virus and may or may not have been infected. Current recommendation for COVID-19 is to quarantine for "at least" 5 days but monitor for symptoms for 10 days. Stay home and stay away from people you live with, especially people who are at higher risk of getting very sick from COVID-19. Fully vaccinated individuals have different quarantine rules (see below). People 18 and older must have received their primary series (2 doses of Pfizer or Moderna or 1 dose of Johnson and Johnson) AND have received their booster at least 2 weeks previously in order to be considered fully vaccinated. Those 5-17 years of age are fully vaccinated 2 weeks after their second dose of vaccine.

Day zero – This is the day that either the symptoms started, the day of possible exposure or the day of a positive COVID test without exposure or symptoms. When calculating days of isolation/quarantine for a 5 or 10-day isolation/exposure, the days START on day one (not zero).

When infected with COVID, a person can expose others for 5 to 10 days after developing symptoms. Anyone who has been in close contact with someone who is COVID positive needs to quarantine for 5 days from the last day of exposure and continue to monitor for symptoms for 10 days. In some families when a child has COVID it may be impossible for the child to be isolated from everyone else in the home. For the duration of the child's isolation, anyone having close contact with the child is considered exposed. Each contact and the family member's day zero for quarantine shifts to the last day of contact with the sick child. This means that if a COVID positive person is not able to isolate completely and has prolonged symptoms, household contacts can end up needing to quarantine for 20 days.

This situation becomes more complicated when multiple family members become ill. If another person in the household becomes symptomatic, or tests positive, quarantine day zero resets for everyone else in the household. Once someone tests positive, that person needs to isolate by the rules listed above (quarantine no longer applies).

People who are fully vaccinated do NOT need to quarantine after contact with someone who has COVID-19 unless they have symptoms. However, fully vaccinated people should get tested 5 days after their exposure, even if they don't have symptoms and wear a mask indoors in public for 10 days following exposure. Again, if unable to separate from a COVID positive child, exposure continues daily so repeat testing 5 days after the child's isolation is needed. You should monitor for symptoms for 10 days after exposure.