

UPDATE: COVID-19 Isolation and Quarantine Period Clarification for the General Population

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TO:	Health Alert Network
FROM:	Keara Klinepeter, Acting Secretary of Health
SUBJECT:	COVID-19 Isolation and Quarantine Periods Clarification for the General Population
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This transmission is a “Health Update,” provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

HOSPITALS: PLEASE SHARE WITH ALL MEDICAL, PEDIATRIC, NURSING AND LABORATORY STAFF IN YOUR HOSPITAL; **EMS COUNCILS:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE; **FQHCs:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE **LOCAL HEALTH JURISDICTIONS:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE; **PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE TO YOUR MEMBERSHIP; **LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES:** PLEASE SHARE WITH ALL MEDICAL, INFECTION CONTROL, AND NURSING STAFF IN YOUR FACILITY

- Additional clarification to the updated isolation and quarantine timelines for COVID-19 is provided below.
- This is intended to replace [PA-HAN-615](#).
- If you have questions about this guidance, please call your local health department or **1-877-PA-HEALTH (1-877-724-3258)**.

Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) provides this guidance based on available information about COVID-19 and is subject to change.

On January 4, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) clarified their [guidelines for isolation and quarantine periods](#) for the general public. Based on these updated recommendations, the Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) is updating guidance for individuals infected with and exposed to COVID-19. This guidance provides clarification on isolation and quarantine guidance based on vaccination status. This guidance applies to COVID-19 vaccines currently authorized for emergency use by the [U.S. Food and Drug Administration \(FDA\)](#), and to COVID-19 vaccines that have been authorized for emergency use by the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#).

Currently authorized vaccines in the United States are highly effective at protecting vaccinated people against symptomatic and severe COVID-19. Data from clinical trials showed that a booster shot increased the immune response in trial participants who finished a [Pfizer-BioNTech primary series 5 months earlier](#), a Moderna primary series 6 months earlier, or a J&J/Janssen single-dose vaccine 2 months earlier. With an increased immune response, people should have improved protection against getting infected with COVID-19. For Pfizer-BioNTech and J&J/Janssen, clinical trials also showed that a booster shot helped

prevent severe disease. They are at substantially reduced risk of severe illness and death from COVID-19 compared with unvaccinated people.

At the time of this PA-HAN, CDC and DOH have recommended boosters for all persons aged 12 and older. Additionally, CDC and DOH recommend that moderately or severely immunocompromised 5–11-year-olds receive an additional primary dose of vaccine 28 days after their second shot. At this time, only the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine is authorized and recommended for children aged 5–11.

Heterologous (mix-and-match) [dosing](#) may occur for the booster dose for persons aged 18 and older. For the purposes of this guidance, a person is considered to be boosted the same day as they receive the booster shot.

This guidance applies to the general population in the community setting. In certain congregate settings that have high-risk of secondary transmission (e.g., correctional facilities and homeless shelters), CDC currently recommends a 10-day quarantine (if exposed) and isolation (if infected) period for residents. During periods of critical staffing shortages, facilities may consider shortening isolation and quarantine periods for staff to ensure continuity of operations. This guidance does NOT apply to healthcare workers or healthcare settings. PA-HAN [614](#) and [616](#) provides additional guidance for healthcare workers.

Additional setting specific guidance is forthcoming which may alter or further clarify recommendations in these settings. School specific guidance can be found [here](#).

Quarantine Guidance for Individuals Exposed to COVID-19

People Who Do NOT Need to Quarantine

For persons who come into [close contact](#) with someone with COVID-19 and are in one of the following groups, they do NOT need to quarantine:

- Persons who are 18 or older and have received ALL [recommended vaccine doses](#), including boosters and [additional primary shots](#) for some immunocompromised individuals.
- Persons who are 5-17 and have completed the primary series of COVID-19 vaccines.
- Persons who had confirmed COVID-19 within the last 90 days as diagnosed by a [viral test](#).

People who do not need to quarantine should still wear a [well-fitting mask](#) around others for 10 days from the date of the last close contact with someone with COVID-19 (the date of last close contact is considered day 0). Additionally, it is recommended that anyone exposed to COVID-19 should [get tested](#) at least 5 days after the last close contact with someone with COVID-19. If that test is positive or the person develops COVID-19 symptoms, they should follow recommendations in the isolation section below.

Regardless of whether an individual has quarantined for 5 days or has not had to quarantine, people who have been in close contact to someone with COVID-19 should not go to places (e.g., gym, restaurants) where they are unable to wear a mask until 10 days after the last close contact to someone with COVID-19.

People who tested positive for COVID-19 with a [viral test](#) within the previous 90 days and subsequently recovered and remain without COVID-19 symptoms do not need to quarantine or be tested after close contact, however they should wear a [well-fitting mask for 10 days after the exposure](#). If someone develops symptoms consistent with COVID-19, testing is recommended regardless of vaccination status.

People Who Do Need to Quarantine

For persons who come into [close contact](#) with someone with COVID-19 and are in one of the following groups, they should quarantine:

- Persons aged 18 or older and completed the [primary series](#) of recommended vaccine, but have not received a [recommended](#) booster shot when eligible.
- Persons who received the single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine (completing the primary series) over 2 months ago and have not received a [recommended](#) booster shot.
- Persons who are not vaccinated or have not completed a [primary vaccine series](#).

People who are quarantining should stay home and away from other people for at least 5 days (day 0 through day 5) after the last contact with a person who has COVID-19 and wear a [well-fitting mask](#) around others at home where possible. Additionally, these people should monitor for symptoms, including fever (100.4°F or greater); if symptoms develop, they should be tested immediately and isolate until the results are received. If the test is positive, the person should isolate.

For people who share a household with someone who has COVID-19, the close contact's quarantine period (if applicable) starts from the last time they were exposed to the person with COVID-19. If the person with COVID-19 cannot fully isolate, the household contacts who are either unvaccinated or have not received all the recommended doses should quarantine for an additional 5 days AFTER the person with COVID-19 is released from isolation. Any exposures that occur during day 6-10 of the "masking period" are not consider close contacts.

People who cannot wear a mask, including children < 2 years of age and people of any age with certain disabilities, should quarantine (if exposed) for 10 days.

If the quarantining person does NOT develop symptoms, they should be tested at least 5 days after the last close contact with someone with COVID-19. If the test is negative, the person can end their quarantine and leave their house; however, they should continue to wear a [well-fitting mask](#) when around others at home and in public until 10 days after the last close contact with someone with COVID-19. If the test is positive, the person should isolate. If the person is unable to be tested AND they have been asymptomatic through the 5 day period, then they may end their quarantine, provided they wear a [well-fitting mask](#) around others at home and in public.

Regardless of whether an individual has quarantined for 5 days or has not had to quarantine, people who have been in close contact to someone with COVID-19 should not go to places (e.g., gym, restaurants) where they are unable to wear a mask until 10 days after the last close contact to someone with COVID-19.

People under quarantine should not travel during the 5-day quarantine period. If a person under quarantine cannot be tested, any travel should be delayed until 10 days after the last exposure. If travel before that 10 days is completed is absolutely necessary, the person should wear a [well-fitting mask](#) around people during the entire duration of the travel during the 10 days. If the person cannot wear a mask, they should not travel.

These guidelines do not apply to congregate settings with a high risk of secondary transmission (e.g., correctional facilities, homeless shelters, cruise ships). CDC and DOH recommend a 10-day quarantine for residents, regardless of vaccination and booster status. CDC and DOH also recommend a 10-day isolation period for residents or staff who test positive for COVID-19. During periods of critical staffing shortages, facilities may consider shortening the quarantine period for staff to ensure continuity of operations.

Isolation Guidance for Individuals Who Has Presumed or Confirmed COVID-19 Infection

Anyone who has presumed or confirmed COVID-19 infection should stay home and isolate from others for at least 5 full days. They should wear a mask when around others at home or in public for an additional 5 days after that. People who have COVID-19 should isolate, regardless of vaccination status. This includes people who have a positive viral test, regardless of whether they have symptoms.

People with Symptomatic COVID-19

Individuals with symptomatic COVID-19 must isolate for at least 5 days. Isolation can be ended after 5 full days if the person is fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of antipyretics) and other symptoms have improved. If fever persists or other symptoms have not improved after 5 days, the person should wait to end isolation until symptoms have improved and fever has resolved.

People who have [moderate](#) COVID-19 illness should isolate for 10 days.

People with Asymptomatic COVID-19

People who test positive for COVID-19 but do not develop symptoms must isolate for 5 days. If they continue to be asymptomatic for the 5 days, they can leave isolation. If the person develops symptoms after testing positive, the 5-day isolation period starts over; Day 0 is the first day of symptoms.

All People with COVID-19

After leaving isolation, anyone who has COVID-19, regardless of the presence of symptoms, is strongly encouraged to wear a [well-fitting mask](#) while around other people until 10 days after the onset of symptoms (if symptomatic) or the test date (if asymptomatic). Anyone who has COVID-19 is strongly encouraged to avoid people who are [immunocompromised or at high risk for severe disease](#), nursing homes, and other high risk settings until after 10 days.

Additionally, people with COVID-19 are instructed to not travel during their isolation period and are encouraged to avoid travel until the full 10 days have passed. If travel during days 6-10 is unavoidable, these people need to wear a [well-fitting mask](#) for the duration of travel. If the person cannot wear a mask, they should not travel. Finally, anyone with COVID-19, regardless of the presence of symptoms, is instructed to not go places where they are unable to wear a mask (e.g., gyms, restaurants) until the full 10 days have passed.

If an individual has access to a test and wishes to be tested, the best approach is to use an [antigen test](#) towards the end of the 5-day isolation period; however, either a PCR or an antigen test is acceptable. Testing should only occur if the person is fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication and other symptoms have improved (loss of taste and smell may persist for weeks or months after recovery and need not delay the end of isolation). If the test result is positive, the person should continue to isolate until day 10. If the test result is negative, isolation can be ended, but they should continue to wear a [well-fitting mask](#) around others at home and in public until day 10. Any exposures that occurring during day 6-10 of the “masking period” are not consider close contacts.

People who cannot wear a mask, including children < 2 years of age and people of any age with certain disabilities, should isolate (if infected) for 10 days.

Note that these recommendations on ending isolation **do not** apply to immunocompromised people or people with severe COVID-19. People who are severely ill with COVID-19 (including those who were hospitalized or required intensive care or ventilation support) and people with [compromised immune systems](#) might need to isolate at home longer. They may also require testing with a [viral test](#) to determine

when they can be around others. CDC and DOH recommend an isolation period of at least 10 and up to 20 days for people who were severely ill with COVID-19 and for [people with weakened immune systems](#).

People who are immunocompromised should talk to their healthcare provider about the potential for reduced immune responses to COVID-19 vaccines and the need to continue to follow [current prevention measures](#) (including wearing a [well-fitting mask](#), [staying 6 feet apart from others](#) they don't live with, and avoiding crowds and poorly ventilated indoor spaces) to protect themselves against COVID-19 until advised otherwise by their healthcare provider. Close contacts of immunocompromised people – including household members – should also be encouraged to receive all [recommended COVID-19 vaccine doses](#) to help protect these people. Close contacts of immunocompromised people, including household members, should also be encouraged to receive all recommended COVID-19 vaccine doses to help protect these people.

If you have questions about this guidance, please call your local health department or **1-877-PA-HEALTH (1-877-724-3258)**. Individuals interested in receiving further PA-HANs are encouraged to register at <https://han.pa.gov/>.

Categories of Health Alert messages:

Health Alert: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

This information is current as of January 7, 2022 but may be modified in the future. We will continue to post updated information regarding the most common questions about this subject.