COVID-19: Understanding Quarantine and Isolation

This table provides a summary of COVID-19 quarantine and isolation. See below for more information.

	Quarantine	Isolation
What does it mean?	Staying home, monitoring your health and safely separating from others after you were recently exposed to someone with COVID-19.	Staying home, monitoring your health and safely separating from others when you have COVID-19 or symptoms of COVID-19.
Who needs to do this?	People who have been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19.	People who are confirmed to have COVID-19 (recent positive diagnostic test result) or have symptoms of COVID-19.
Why should I do this?	If you are near someone with COVID-19, you are more likely to get it. Staying home can prevent the spread to others. You can have and spread COVID-19 even if you do not have symptoms.	Staying home can prevent the spread of COVID-19 to others. You can spread COVID-19 even if you do not have symptoms.
Where should I stay?	At home or a free Take Care hotel.	At home, a health care facility or a free Take Care hotel.
Should I get tested for COVID-19?	Yes. You should get tested unless you are fully vaccinated against COVID-19..	If you have symptoms and have not been tested, get tested right away. Stay isolated while waiting for your test results.
Should I get medical care?	You should take your temperature twice daily and monitor for other symptoms. Contact your health care provider if you develop symptoms or if you are older or have a health condition that increases risk for severe COVID-19. Go to a hospital or call **911** if you have trouble breathing or another medical emergency.	Yes. You should take your temperature twice daily and monitor for other symptoms. Contact your health care provider to let them know of your positive test result or symptoms and to discuss treatment options (see below). Go to a hospital or call **911** if you have trouble breathing or another medical emergency.
How do I protect other household members?	Avoid contact as much as possible. Always remain at least 6 feet from others, wear a face covering whenever you are not alone in a room, and clean and disinfect your home often (see below for details).	Avoid contact as much as possible. Always remain at least 6 feet from others, wear a face covering whenever you are not alone in a room, and clean and disinfect your home often (see below for details).
Can I go to school?	No (remote learning only).	No (remote learning only).
Can I go to work?	No, except some essential workers may be able to go to work (see below for details).	No.
What if I am vaccinated?	You do not need to quarantine if fully vaccinated.	You need to isolate if you have symptoms of COVID-19 or test positive for COVID-19, even if fully vaccinated.
Where am I allowed to go?	To get essential medical care (including testing) and basic needs, like groceries, if you have no other way to get them (see below for precautions you should take).	To get essential medical care (including testing) and basic needs, like groceries, if you have no other way to get them (see below for precautions you should take).
How long?	10 days after your last contact with the person who had COVID-19.	For at least 10 days from when your symptoms started or, if you had no symptoms, 10 days from when you were tested (see below for full isolation criteria).

Frequently Asked Questions: Quarantine

What is the definition of close contact?
A close contact is someone who has been within 6 feet for at least 10 minutes over a 24-hour period of someone who has COVID-19. In most cases, all people living with someone who has COVID-19 are close contacts. Close contacts may also include home health aides, coworkers, classmates, or friends or families you have spent time with.

How do I figure out the date my quarantine ends?
If you are a close contact, you must quarantine for 10 days from your last close contact to the person who has COVID-19. Your employer may require you to stay out of work for a different period of time based on New York State (NYS) requirements for specific industries. If you develop symptoms of COVID-19 or test positive while in quarantine, you should get tested and start isolation.

If I test negative for COVID-19, can I end quarantine early?
No, you cannot end quarantine early with a negative test result. It is possible that you tested negative because you have not yet developed COVID-19 at the time of testing. It can take several days to develop COVID-19 from when you were exposed.

If I am vaccinated against COVID-19 and have been exposed to someone with COVID-19, do I still need to quarantine?
People who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 and have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 do not need to quarantine, as long as they have no COVID-19 symptoms following their exposure. **Fully vaccinated** means two weeks after receiving their second dose of a two-dose vaccine (such as the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccines) or two weeks after receiving a single-dose vaccine (such as the Johnson & Johnson/Janssen vaccine).

If I test positive for antibodies, do I still need to quarantine if I am a close contact?
Yes. In NYS, quarantine is still required even if you test positive for antibodies.

If I previously had COVID-19, do I still need to quarantine?
People who have had COVID-19 within the past three months (positive diagnostic test) and recovered and have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 do not need to quarantine or retest for COVID-19 for three months following their illness, as long as they have no COVID-19 symptoms following their exposure. Three months is measured from the date a person first had COVID-19 symptoms or, if they had no symptoms, the date of their first positive diagnostic test. If more than three months have passed since a person had COVID-19, this exception does not apply, and the person must follow regular quarantine requirements.

Who must quarantine due to travel?
Quarantine following travel is no longer required in NYS; however, post-travel testing and quarantine are still recommended for some travelers. Quarantine may be required in some settings, such as group living facilities. Some workers, such as health care workers, have stricter rules for returning to work after travel. For more information, visit the NYS Travel Advisory website at coronavirus.health.ny.gov/covid-19-travel-advisory.

Who can go to work while in quarantine?
Close contacts who are essential workers, as defined by NYS, may go to work while in quarantine under limited circumstances. If you think this applies to you, contact your employer as there are specific steps they must follow. People allowed to work during quarantine must follow additional requirements such as wearing a face covering at all times while at work and quarantining while not at work.

Someone in my home was told to quarantine due to an exposure outside the home (such as school or work). Does that mean I have to quarantine too?
No. As a contact of a contact, you do not need to quarantine. You should monitor closely for symptoms and avoid close contact with the person who is quarantining as it is possible they have COVID-19 and do not know it. If the person in your home develops COVID-19, you will likely be a close contact and need to quarantine.

Frequently Asked Questions: Isolation

How do I figure out the date my isolation period ends?
If you have symptoms of COVID-19 and either tested positive for COVID-19 or did not get tested, you can leave your home when **all** the following are true:
- It has been at least 10 days since your symptoms started.
- You have not had a fever for the prior 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing drugs.
- Your overall illness has improved.

If you never had symptoms but tested positive, stay home for 10 days from the date you were tested.

Your health care provider may recommend a longer period of isolation due to underlying health conditions or based on the course of your illness. Also, your employer may require you to stay out of work for a different period of time based on NYS requirements for specific industries.

You are considered no longer contagious at the end of the isolation period. You do not need to show a negative test result to end isolation. It is possible to get COVID-19 again, so it is important to continue physical distancing, wearing a face covering and practicing healthy hand hygiene when outside your home.

If I test negative for COVID-19, do I still need to isolate?
If you have symptoms, you must isolate while waiting for your test result. If your test result confirms you have COVID-19, you must complete the full isolation period described above. If you are not yet confirmed to have COVID-19 and you test negative by a molecular diagnostic test, you can stop isolating if you have not had a fever in the past 24 hours without use of fever-reducing drugs. If you test negative by an antigen or antibody test, you must continue to isolate.

To learn more about the different kinds of COVID-19 tests, see COVID-19: Testing Frequently Asked Questions. If you are not sure what kind of test you had, check with your health care provider.

If I previously had COVID-19 and test positive again, do I still need to isolate?
If you were confirmed with COVID-19 (positive diagnostic test) in the past three months, you do not need to isolate again if you remain without symptoms but have another positive COVID-19 test. This is because many people who had COVID-19 test positive for weeks or even months after infection, but they are no longer contagious. However, if you develop symptoms after recovering from COVID-19, you should contact your health care provider. It is possible to get COVID-19 again.

If I am vaccinated against COVID-19, do I still need to isolate?
Yes. If you have symptoms of COVID-19, you should seek diagnostic testing and must isolate.

Should I seek medical care if I have symptoms or test positive for COVID-19?
You should contact your health care provider to let them know you have symptoms or have a positive test result. This is especially important if you are an older adult, pregnant or have health conditions that put you at increased risk for severe COVID-19 illness. Use a telephone or telemedicine when possible. If you have trouble breathing or another medical emergency, call **911** or go to a nearby hospital.

People at high risk for severe COVID-19 illness who have tested positive for COVID-19 may be eligible for monoclonal antibody treatment. Monoclonal antibody treatment can lower the amount of virus in your body, reduce symptoms and help avoid a trip to the hospital. It is most effective when received soon after COVID-19 symptoms begin, so it is important to get tested and care right away. For more information, including on where to get treatment, see Monoclonal Antibody Treatment for COVID-19.

What if I do not have a health care provider or health insurance?
If you need a health care provider, NYC Health + Hospitals welcomes all New Yorkers, regardless of immigration status or ability to pay. Visit nychealthandhospitals.org for more information and to search for a health care provider, or call 844-NYC-4NYC (844-692-4692) or **311**. Several NYC Health + Hospitals outpatient facilities offer monoclonal antibody treatment.

How to Safely Quarantine and Isolate

How do I monitor my health while in quarantine or isolation?
You should take your temperature twice daily and monitor for symptoms, such as shortness of breath, cough, and loss of taste of smell or taste. If you have a fingertip oxygen meter (pulse oximeter), you can use that as well (see here for instructions). You should get tested for COVID-19 if you have not done so already.

Call your health care provider if you develop symptoms or if your symptoms worsen. If it Is a medical emergency, call **911** or go to a nearby hospital.

What can I do to protect others in my household during quarantine or isolation?

- **Create physical distance**. Stay at least 6 feet from others. Stay in a separate room, if possible. Sleep head-to-toe if you share a bed or have someone sleep on the couch. Move seating and

other furniture around to maintain physical distance. Keep people who are sick separate from others, especially from people at increased risk for serious illness. Do not have visitors come to your home.

- **Cover up**. Wear a face covering at all times unless you are alone in a separate room; you should also wear a face covering when you are around pets. Other household members should also wear a face covering when they are in the same room as you.
- **Keep it clean**. Throw tissues into the garbage immediately after use. Wash your hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds, especially after you cough or sneeze. Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer if you are unable to wash your hands. Frequently clean surfaces you touch, such as counters, doorknobs, light switches, faucet handles, phones and remote controls, using household cleaning spray or wipes. Wash towels, blankets, sheets and clothes at the warmest possible setting with your usual detergent, and dry completely. Do not share glasses, cups, plates or utensils with others and wash them after every use. Do not share food.
- **Stay in a Take Care Hotel**. The NYC Test & Trace Corps will make sure that anyone who tests positive for COVID-19 and their close contacts will have the resources needed to safely separate in a hotel, free of charge, or at home to help prevent the spread of the virus. NYC Test & Trace Corps Contact Tracers can refer to the hotel program or anyone can call 212-COVID19 (212-268-4319) to book a room. For more information on Take Care Hotels, visit nychealthandhospitals.org/test-and-trace/take-care.

What if I have to leave home while in quarantine or isolation for essential medical care or supplies?
If you need to leave home:
- Wear a face covering and stay at least 6 feet away from others.
- Wash your hands with soap and water before going out and use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer while outside.
- Avoid other people as much as possible — walk if you can and do not enter crowded stores or transportation.

Can I get paid leave from work for quarantine or isolation?
Contact your employer for questions about their leave policy. You may qualify for paid leave under the NYS Paid Family Leave Act, which apples to quarantine and isolation, including staying home to care for a minor child who has to isolate or quarantine. Visit paidfamilyleave.ny.gov/covid19 for more information.

Additional Resources:
- For information on COVID-19, visit nyc.gov/health/coronavirus and cdc.gov/coronavirus.
- For information on COVID-19 vaccination, visit nyc.gov/covidvaccine.
- To find a testing site, visit nyc.gov/covidtest. Many sites offer free testing.
- To find a health care provider, call 844-NYC-4NYC (844-692-4692).
- To book a COVID-19 hotel, visit Take Care or call 212-COVID19 (212-268-4319).
- If you have questions, call **311** or 212-COVID19 (212-268-4319).

The NYC Health Department may change recommendations as the situation evolves.   4.21.21