

**January 7, 2022**

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

COVID-19 is a respiratory disease caused by a 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, with a median of 4-5 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 10 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>.

Guidance below includes general recommendations for persons exposed to COVID-19. These recommendations do not replace more detailed guidance for return-to-work or for certain congregate settings, where specific guidance is available from CDC or DPH.

All persons exposed to COVID-19 regardless of vaccination status or quarantine status outlined below should wear a well-fitting mask for the 10 days following an exposure when around others. In areas where universal masking is recommended or required, persons should wear a mask in all public indoor settings regardless of test results or time since exposure. CDC guidance for your area can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/about-face-coverings.html>. Please also check local resources for specific recommendations or requirements in your area.

Quarantine for individuals not vaccinated for COVID-19 or who are not considered up to date on their COVID-19 vaccination and who have not recently recovered from a COVID-19 infection*

*Determine if you are up to date by visiting: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/stay-up-to-date.html>

If you are not sick, you should monitor your health for symptoms of COVID-19 during the 10 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 10 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 should quarantine yourself at home except in case of emergency or to be tested for COVID-19.

The recommended time period for quarantine is 10 days, but you may leave quarantine any day after 5 full days have passed since your most recent exposure occurred if you do not

experience any symptoms of COVID-19 and continue to wear a well-fitting mask around others for 5 additional days. The date of your last exposure is considered day 0. During days 0-5, you should wear a well-fitting mask around others at home or where you are completing your quarantine, if possible.

If you are unable to quarantine or if you discontinue quarantine prior to 10 days, you should continue to monitor your health and follow mitigation strategies until 10 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

Even if you remain asymptomatic, it is recommended that you seek testing on day 5 after your most recent exposure, if possible. If tested, the test obtained should be a diagnostic test (PCR or antigen). See more information about testing below.

- If you test negative, you may leave quarantine after at least 5 days have passed since your last exposure but should still wear a well-fitting mask around others until 10 days have passed since your exposure.
- If a positive test is returned, please follow DPH guidance for isolation <https://dph.georgia.gov/isolation-contact>.
- If you are unable to be tested, you may leave quarantine after at least 5 days have passed since your last exposure if you remain without symptoms. You should wear a well-fitting mask around others until 10 days have passed since your exposure.

- It is recommended that you avoid people who are immunocompromised or at high risk of severe disease, and those in nursing homes and other high-risk settings until at least 10 days after your last exposure, regardless of any test results during quarantine.

If you are unable to wear a well-fitting mask for any reason, it is recommended that you quarantine for the full 10 days, regardless of test results.

Quarantine for vaccinated individuals who ARE considered up to date on their COVID-19 vaccination*

*Determine if you are up to date by visiting: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/stay-up-to-date.html>

Individuals who meet the above criteria for vaccination and who are exposed to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 are NOT required to quarantine, but should:

- Seek testing 5 days after exposure, if possible and
- Wear a well-fitting mask around others for 10 days after exposure, day 0 is your date of last exposure

If tested, the test obtained should be a diagnostic test (PCR or antigen). If a positive test is returned, please follow DPH guidance for isolation <https://dph.georgia.gov/isolation-contact>

Individuals who do NOT meet the above criteria for up to date vaccination and who are exposed to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 should follow guidance in the section of this document titled “Quarantine for individuals not vaccinated for COVID-19 or who are not considered up to date on their COVID-19 vaccination and who have not recently recovered from a COVID-19 infection”.

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.

Quarantine for individuals who have had a COVID-19 infection in the last 90 days

Individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19 with a viral test (PCR or antigen) within the previous 90 days and subsequently recovered and remain without COVID-19 symptoms, do not need to quarantine or get tested after close contact.

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/your-health/quarantine-isolation.html>
- If 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 and have questions, 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>
- Congregate settings include both healthcare congregate settings, such as long-term care facilities, inpatient rehabilitation facilities, etc. and non-healthcare settings, such as jails, prisons, shelters, etc. Dormitories are not typically considered a congregate setting in determining quarantine requirements. If you live or work in a congregate setting, you should follow CDC guidance, where available, for your setting.

COVID-19 Testing

It is recommended that you seek testing during quarantine on day 5 post exposure. The test should be a diagnostic test (PCR or antigen). 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

You can find information on how to schedule a test 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 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 regardless of your vaccination status until one of the following is fulfilled:

- If you are tested for COVID-19 while symptomatic on a diagnostic test (PCR or antigen) and you are negative, you can return to normal activities once your symptoms resolve or after the end of your quarantine period as outlined above, whichever is longer. The most important thing is to stay home while you are sick.
- If you are tested for COVID-19 while symptomatic on a diagnostic test (PCR or antigen) and you are **positive**, or if you do **NOT** get tested, you should follow isolation guidance found here: <https://dph.georgia.gov/isolation-contact>

Although tests performed under the supervision of a healthcare provider are preferred, if you test positive on an at-home test, you should follow guidance for a person who has tested positive for COVID-19, though you may not be contacted by public health.

In general, when you are sick:

- 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>
- 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 with COVID-19**, please review DPH isolation guidance for information: <https://dph.georgia.gov/isolation-contact>
- **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)