

COVID-19 FAQs

Diagnosis, Treatment, and Quarantine

Q: What should I do while waiting for test results?

A: Tests results are typically returned within 48 hours, but may take longer.

- If you have had suspected or known exposure or ongoing symptoms, stay home, monitor your health, and talk to your doctor or other healthcare provider.
- If you do not have signs or symptoms, but have known or suspected exposure to COVID-19, stay home since symptoms may appear two to 14 days after exposure to an infected person.
- If you do not have signs or symptoms and have no known or suspected exposure to COVID-19, staying home is not required, but continue following public health measures.

More information about steps to take while waiting for test results is [available here](#).

Q: What should I do if I test positive for COVID-19?

A: If you have tested positive for the virus, please take the following steps and consult with your healthcare provider for additional instructions.

If you tested positive and have symptoms:

- Stay in a separate room from others in your home to help protect them from getting the virus. Stay in your bedroom if possible and use separate bathrooms. If this is not possible, wear a face covering when in the same room and stay at least 6 feet from others. Wipe down high-touch areas at least every day with a disinfectant.
- Do not allow visitors into your home.
- Build a list of the people you have recently been around and respond to the health department's outreach.
- Drink plenty of fluids and eat when you can.
- Take medicine for pain or fever as needed.
- Rest as much as you can.
- Follow care instructions from your doctor or other healthcare provider.
- Seek emergency medical care immediately if you have trouble breathing, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion, inability to wake or stay awake, or bluish lips or face.
- Limit contact with pets. If you do interact with pets, wash your hands before and after.
- Isolate until all three of these things are true:

- Your symptoms are better.
- It has been 10 days since you first felt sick.
- You have had no fever for at least 24 hours without using fever-reducing medicine.

If you tested positive but do not have symptoms:

- Stay home for 10 days after the date you were tested. Symptoms could develop later.
- If you develop symptoms during those 10 days, stay home until all three of these things are true:
 - Your symptoms are better.
 - It has been 10 days since you first felt sick.
 - You have had no fever for at least 24 hours without using medicine that lowers fever.

Visit coronavirus.ohio.gov for more information about [testing](#) and [quarantining](#), as well [as tips for how to safely stay at home and away from others](#).

Q: If I test positive, how can I protect others?

A: If you test positive, keep your distance from those in your household and outside of your household.

Stay in your bedroom and use a bathroom separate from the one used by other members of your household, if possible. Clean and sanitize frequently. Wear a face mask when around others and try to stay at least 6 feet away.

Have someone else in the home prepare meals and leave them outside your bedroom door. Don't share bedding, towels, dishes, or water bottles with others. If something is shared, wash it with soap and water before each use by a different person.

Click here for a [checklist on what to do if under quarantine](#).

Q: If I test positive, who should I notify?

A: If you test positive for COVID-19, your healthcare provider will contact you to let you know that you tested positive and notify your local health department. The local health department will then notify the Ohio Department of Health so your case is added to the [state's data](#).

A public health worker who is performing [contact tracing](#) will reach out to you to create a list of who you have been in close contact with and potentially exposed to the virus. The [local health department](#) will notify anyone who may have been exposed and provide instructions. Contact tracers will not disclose your identity to your contacts; however, if you test positive, you are encouraged to notify people you have been around if you feel comfortable doing so, so they respond to the outreach and begin to stay home, too.

Information on how to prepare for contact tracing, including a sample sheet for listing close contacts, is [available here](#).

Q: How long do I really have to quarantine?

A: The Ohio Department of Health updated quarantine timelines, based on [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) guidance](#), for those who may have been exposed to coronavirus but are not showing symptoms. While a 14-day quarantine is still recommended, the new guidelines include two options depending on the situation:

- 10-day quarantine that does not require testing, provided there are no symptoms. Testing at least eight days into the quarantine period is recommended to increase certainty of no infection.
- Seven-day quarantine if test results are negative, provided there are no symptoms and the test was performed at least five days after the potential exposure.

The Ohio Department of Health continues to recommend a 14-day quarantine for many Ohioans, especially if any at-risk populations are involved or there is a risk for high spread based on the setting. The full 14-day period is recommended for people who:

- Live in, work at, or visit congregate living facilities, such as nursing homes.
- Work in places with a large number of employees.
- Spend time in other settings in which COVID-19 could spread extensively.
- Have contact with people at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

For more information about the [updated quarantine guidance](#), visit coronavirus.ohio.gov or cdc.gov/coronavirus.

Q: Why do I have to quarantine if I don't have any symptoms? What counts as "close contact"?

A: People who are not fully vaccinated and have been in close contact with someone who has an active COVID-19 case are asked to stay home and stay away from others because symptoms may not appear immediately.

Close contact includes:

- Standing within 6 feet for at least 15 minutes over a 24-hour period, with or without a face mask.
- Direct physical contact.
- Shared utensils.
- A nearby cough or sneeze.
- Home care for someone who is sick with COVID-19.

People do not have to quarantine if they have been fully vaccinated against the disease and show no symptoms, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). However, if you live in a group setting, like a group home, you should stay away from others for 14 days and get tested, even if don't have symptoms and/or are vaccinated.

Visit coronavirus.ohio.gov for [frequently asked questions about quarantine](#).

Q: What should I do if I think I have been exposed to COVID-19?

A: Local health departments will contact anyone who has been determined to have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for coronavirus. Close contact is generally defined as being within 6 feet of a person who is infected for a period of 15 minutes or more over a 14-hour period, with or without masks, depending upon the exposure level and setting.

Those who have been exposed will be instructed to self-quarantine and monitor their symptoms for cough, fever, and shortness of breath. If they show no symptoms, after a specific period of time, their quarantine lifts. If these individuals do begin to show symptoms, they should contact their healthcare provider for additional instruction, including [testing options](#).

[Click here to learn more about contact tracing](#) and how to contact your [local health department](#).

Q: When can I return to work after quarantine?

A: Check with your employer for your company's specific guidelines regarding return-to-work policies after testing positive for COVID-19 or quarantining because of close contact. Employees with COVID-19 who have stayed home can stop home isolation and return to work when they have met one of the sets of criteria found [here](#).

Some general guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

- If you had symptoms of COVID-19, you can end your home isolation and return to work when all of the following criteria have been met:
 - At least 10 days have passed since your symptoms first appeared.
 - At least 24 hours have passed since you last had a fever without using fever-reducing medication.
 - All of your symptoms have improved.
- If you had a severe case of COVID-19 or if you are immunocompromised, talk with your healthcare provider for guidance on how long you need to wait to return to work and if any special arrangements are needed.
- If you never had symptoms and are not immunocompromised, you can end your home isolation and return to work when at least 10 days have passed after the date you first tested positive for COVID-19.

For more information, visit the [CDC's guidance for employers](#) or [resources about returning to work](#).

Q: I've already had COVID-19. Do I still have to quarantine if exposed to it again?

A: Individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19 within the past three months and recovered do not have to quarantine or get tested again as long as they do not develop new symptoms. People who develop symptoms again within three months of their first bout of COVID-19 may need to be tested again if there is no other cause identified for their symptoms, according to the CDC.

[Cases of reinfection](#) of COVID-19 have been reported but are rare. In general, reinfection means a person was infected and got sick once, recovered, and then became infected again. Based on what we know from similar viruses, some reinfections are expected.

All individuals, regardless of whether they have had COVID-19 or not, should continue to take preventative measures, including wearing face coverings over the mouth and nose when in public places or other peoples' homes, stay at least 6 feet away from other people, avoid crowds and confined spaces, and wash your hands frequently.

Q: I have received the COVID-19 vaccine. Do I still need to quarantine if exposed to it?

A: Vaccinated individuals who have been exposed to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 are not required to [quarantine](#), according to the CDC, if they meet the following criteria:

- The individual is fully vaccinated, meaning it was been at least two weeks following receipt of the second dose in a two-dose vaccine series (Moderna or Pfizer), or at least two weeks following receipt of one dose of a single-dose vaccine (Johnson & Johnson).
- The individual has remained asymptomatic since the current COVID-19 exposure.

Individuals who do not meet these criteria should continue to follow current [quarantine guidance](#) after exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19.

After vaccination, individuals should largely continue to protect themselves and others by wearing a mask over the mouth and nose when in public places or other peoples' homes, staying at least 6 feet away from other people, avoiding crowds and confined spaces, and washing hands frequently.

Fully vaccinated people can stop wearing a mask in **specific situations**: when you are indoors with other people who are fully vaccinated; or when you are indoors with unvaccinated people from one other household (for example, visiting with relatives who all live together), unless any unvaccinated people or anyone they live with have increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19. They still must adhere to Ohio's mask mandate.

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For additional information, visit coronavirus.ohio.gov.

For answers to your COVID-19 questions, call 1-833-4-ASK-ODH (1-833-427-5634).

Your mental health is just as important as your physical health. If you or a loved one are experiencing anxiety related to the coronavirus pandemic, help is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Call the COVID-19 CareLine at 1-800-720-9616.