



HEALTH ADVISORY

CDC Updates and Shortens Recommended Isolation and Quarantine Period for General Population, December 28, 2021

Background

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently updated isolation and quarantine guidelines for COVID based on what is currently known about COVID-19 and the Omicron variant. **Isolation** relates to behavior after confirmed infection. Isolation for 5 days followed by wearing a well-fitting mask will minimize the risk of spreading the virus to others. **Quarantine** refers to the time following exposure to the virus or close contact with someone known to have COVID-19. Both updates come as the Omicron variant continues to spread throughout the U.S. and reflect the current science on when and for how long a person is maximally infectious. Data from South Africa and the United Kingdom demonstrate that vaccine effectiveness against infection for two doses of an mRNA vaccine is approximately 35%. A COVID-19 vaccine booster dose restores vaccine effectiveness against infection to 75%. COVID-19 vaccination decreases the risk of severe disease, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19. CDC strongly encourages COVID-19 vaccination for everyone 5 and older and boosters for everyone 16 and older. Vaccination is the best way to protect yourself and reduce the impact of COVID-19 on our communities.

Isolation Period

The CDC is shortening the recommended time for isolation from 10 days for people with COVID-19 to 5 days, *if asymptomatic*, followed by 5 days of wearing a mask when around others. The change is motivated by science demonstrating that most SARS-CoV-2 transmission occurs early in the course of illness, generally in the 1-2 days prior to onset of symptoms and the 2-3 days after. Therefore, people who test positive should isolate for 5 days and, if asymptomatic at that time, they may leave isolation if they can continue to mask for 5 days to minimize the risk of infecting others. People with fever or symptoms that have not improved should continue to isolate for up to 10 days.

Quarantine Period

CDC is updating the recommended quarantine period for those exposed to COVID-19. For people who are unvaccinated or are more than six months out from their second mRNA dose (or more than 2 months after the J&J vaccine) and not yet boosted, CDC now recommends quarantine for 5 days followed by strict mask use for an additional 5 days. Alternatively, if a 5-day quarantine is not feasible, it is imperative that an exposed person always wear a well-fitting mask when around others for 10 days after exposure. Individuals who have received their booster shot do not need to quarantine following an exposure but should wear a mask for 10 days after the exposure. For all those exposed, best practice would also include a test for SARS-CoV-2 at day 5 after exposure. If symptoms occur, individuals should immediately quarantine until a negative PCR test confirms symptoms are not attributable to COVID-19.

For questions or to report a suspected case, please contact:

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Epidemiology Program
Phone: (210) 207-8876 Fax: (210) 207-8807

Updated Isolation and Quarantine Recommendations for COVID-19

| If You Test Positive for COVID-19 (Isolate) | |
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| <p>Everyone, regardless of vaccination status.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay home for 5 days. • If you have no symptoms or your symptoms are resolving after 5 days, you can leave your home. • Continue to wear a mask around others for 5 additional days. <p><i>If you have a fever or symptoms have not improved, continue to stay home for up to 10 days, until your fever resolves, and symptoms improve.</i></p> |
| If You Were Exposed to Someone with COVID-19 (Quarantine) | |
| <p>If you:</p> <p>Have been boosted OR Completed the primary series of Pfizer or Moderna vaccine within the last 6 months OR Completed the primary series of J&J vaccine within the last 2 months</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wear a mask around others for 10 days. • Test on day 5, if possible. <p><i>If you develop symptoms, get a test and stay home.</i></p> |
| <p>If you:</p> <p>Completed the primary series of Pfizer or Moderna vaccine over 6 months ago and are not boosted OR Completed the primary series of J&J over 2 months ago and are not boosted OR Are unvaccinated</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay home for 5 days. After that continue to wear a mask around others for 5 additional days. • If you can't quarantine, you must wear a mask for 10 days. • Test on day 5 if possible. <p><i>If you develop symptoms, get a test and stay home</i></p> |