

ALERT: Guidance for Patients Under Quarantine After Exposure to SARS-CoV-2

DATE:	9/14/2020
TO:	Health Alert Network
FROM:	Rachel Levine, MD, Secretary of Health
SUBJECT:	ALERT: Guidance for Patients Under Quarantine After Exposure to SARS-CoV-2
DISTRIBUTION:	Statewide
LOCATION:	n/a
STREET ADDRESS:	n/a
COUNTY:	n/a
MUNICIPALITY:	n/a
ZIP CODE:	n/a

This transmission is a “Health Alert”, conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

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

- If PA DOH or the local health department identifies that someone is a close contact to a person with COVID, the close contact must quarantine for 14 days from last contact, even if the person remains asymptomatic.
- A negative test result obtained while a close contact is under quarantine does not release the person from quarantine.
- Because infection can develop up to 14 days after exposure, persons with negative test results must still quarantine for the full 14 days.
- Patients being tested for SARS-CoV-2 infection must be instructed to isolate at home until results are received.

The Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) is asking that clinicians provide the current guidance on quarantine to patients who had close contact with a person with COVID-19. This guidance is based on available information about COVID-19 and subject to change as additional information becomes available.

The incubation period for COVID-19 is thought to extend to 14 days from exposure to symptoms onset. Several studies have documented SARS-CoV-2 infection in patients who never develop symptoms and in patients not yet symptomatic, and transmission from pre-symptomatic and asymptomatic patients is known to occur.

For Patients Who Have Been Identified as a Close Contact to a COVID-19 Case:

Regardless of whether the patient develops symptoms, it is imperative that anyone who has been identified as a close contact of a COVID-19 case remain under quarantine for the full 14 days after the

last date of exposure. Persons under quarantine may seek SARS-CoV-2 testing, but a negative test result does **NOT** allow the patient to end their quarantine period early. Because the incubation period can be as long as 14 days, the patient must stay quarantined for that same length of time. Patients who are close contacts who are also healthcare providers should adhere to their facility's contingency capacity plan.

Individuals who are quarantined should stay home for 14 days after their last known contact. They should watch for fever (100.4°F), cough, shortness of breath, or [other symptoms](#) of COVID-19. If possible, stay away from others, especially people who are at [higher risk](#) for getting very sick from COVID-19. Additional information about quarantine can be found at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine.html>

For Patients Who Are Being Tested for COVID-19:

Healthcare providers should instruct patients who are being evaluated and tested for COVID-19 infection to isolate at home while awaiting test results. Household contacts of the individual being tested do not need to quarantine until test results are available. If the test results are positive, then household members and other close contacts will be instructed to quarantine at that point.

If you have questions about this guidance, please call your local health department or **1-877-PA-HEALTH (1-877-724-3258)**.

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 September 14, 2020 but may be modified in the future. We will continue to post updated information regarding the most common questions about this subject.
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