

UPDATE: Public Health Recommendations – Testing, Isolation, and Quarantine by Vaccination Status

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| DATE: | 7/30/2021 |
| TO: | Health Alert Network |
| FROM: | Alison V. Beam, JD, Acting Secretary of Health |
| SUBJECT: | Public Health Recommendations for People Fully Vaccinated Against COVID-19 |
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This transmission is a “Health Update,” provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

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

- This guidance replaces PA-HAN-566 and provides clarification on quarantine recommendations for persons exposed to SARS-CoV-2.
- In counties with [substantial or high transmission](#), CDC and DOH recommend all persons, regardless of vaccination status, to wear a mask in public indoor settings.
- Fully vaccinated people who have had a known exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 to be tested 2-5 days after exposure, and should wear a mask in public indoor settings for 14 days or until they receive a negative test.
- Regardless of vaccination status, any person with new or unexplained symptoms of COVID-19 still needs to isolate and be evaluated for SARS-CoV-2 testing.
- If you have questions about this guidance, please call your local health department or **1-877-PA-HEALTH (1-877-724-3258)**.

Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) provides this guidance based on available information about COVID-19 and is subject to change.

On July 28, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) updated their [recommendations](#) for individuals who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 given new evidence on the B.1.617.2. (Delta) variant currently circulating in the United States. Based on these updated recommendations, the Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) is updating guidance for individuals exposed to COVID-19. This guidance, which replaces [PA-HAN-566](#), provides clarification on quarantine guidance and public health mitigation strategies (e.g., masking, social distancing) based on vaccination status.

This guidance applies to COVID-19 vaccines currently authorized for emergency use by the [U.S. Food and Drug Administration \(FDA\)](#), and to COVID-19 vaccines that have been authorized for emergency use by the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#).

Guidance for fully vaccinated individuals in healthcare settings can be found in [PA-HAN-563](#) and the [updated healthcare infection prevention and control recommendations](#).

Currently authorized vaccines in the United States are highly effective at protecting vaccinated people against symptomatic and severe COVID-19. Fully vaccinated people are less likely to become infected and, if infected, to develop symptoms of COVID-19. They are at substantially reduced risk of severe illness and death from COVID-19 compared with unvaccinated people.

Recommendation for Asymptomatic Vaccinated Individuals

Infections in fully vaccinated people (breakthrough infections) happen in only a small proportion of people who are fully vaccinated, even with the Delta variant. Moreover, when these infections occur among vaccinated people, they tend to be mild. However, [preliminary evidence](#) suggests that fully vaccinated people who do become infected with the Delta variant can be infectious and can spread the virus to others.

1) Recommendations for Masking in Areas of Substantial or High Community Transmission

Risk of SARS-CoV-2 infection, severe disease, and death is reduced for fully vaccinated people. Though they happen in only a small proportion of people who are fully vaccinated, some infections do occur among fully vaccinated people. Fully vaccinated people who do become infected with the Delta variant can transmit it to others. Therefore, fully vaccinated people can further reduce their risk of becoming infected with the Delta variant and transmitting it to others by wearing a mask in public indoor settings, particularly in [areas of substantial or high community transmission](#).

Wearing a mask in public is most important for people who are immunocompromised. [People at increased risk for severe disease](#) includes older adults and those who have certain medical conditions, such as diabetes, being overweight or obesity, and heart conditions. Unvaccinated household members include:

- Adults who have not completed vaccination,
- Adults who cannot be fully vaccinated, and
- People who are not eligible for vaccines, including children less than 12 years of age.

Fully vaccinated people should also continue to wear a mask where required by federal, state, local, tribal, or territorial laws, rules, and regulations, including local business and workplace guidance, and in correctional facilities, healthcare facilities, and homeless shelters. [Prevention measures, including masking at all times in public indoor settings](#), are still recommended for unvaccinated people.

Information regarding how to select and appropriately use a mask can be found on the [CDC website](#).

2) Recommendations for Fully Vaccinated People with No COVID-19 Symptoms After Exposure to Someone with Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19

Fully vaccinated people should be tested 2-5 days following close contact with someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 and wear a mask in public indoor settings for 14 days or until they receive a negative test result, and isolate if they test positive or develop symptoms. Recommendations for testing of exposed, fully vaccinated healthcare personnel are given in [PA-HAN-569](#).

Fully vaccinated people who live in a household with someone who is immunosuppressed, at increased risk of severe disease, or unvaccinated (including children <12 years of age) could also consider masking at home for 14 days following a known exposure or until they receive a negative test result. They should isolate if they test positive or develop symptoms.

Fully vaccinated people should monitor for [symptoms of COVID-19](#) for 14 days following an exposure regardless of negative test results.

Recommendations for Asymptomatic Vaccinated Patients or Residents in Healthcare Settings

Fully vaccinated inpatients and residents in healthcare settings should continue to quarantine following prolonged close contact (within 6 feet for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period) with someone with SARS-CoV-2 infection. In long-term care facilities, other types of known exposure may also warrant quarantine (refer to [PA-HAN-570](#)). Quarantine in healthcare settings includes the use of Transmission-Based Precautions for COVID-19 per [PA-HAN-563](#). Outpatients should also be cared for using Transmission-Based Precautions for COVID-19.

Recommendations for Fully Vaccinated People with COVID-19 Symptoms

Any fully vaccinated person who experiences [symptoms consistent with COVID-19](#) should isolate themselves from others, be clinically evaluated for COVID-19, and tested for SARS-CoV-2 if indicated. The symptomatic fully vaccinated person should inform their healthcare provider of their vaccination status at the time of presentation to care.

Recommendations for Individuals Who Are Not Fully Vaccinated

Individuals who are not fully vaccinated against COVID-19 and are identified as [close contacts](#) of a COVID-19 case must quarantine. An individual is considered fully vaccinated when 2 or more weeks have passed after the receipt of the second dose in a 2-dose vaccine series, or 2 or more weeks have passed after receipt of one dose of a single-dose vaccine. Quarantine is used to separate someone who might have been exposed to COVID-19 away from others. This individual may or may not develop illness. The most protective recommended quarantine period remains at 14 days after the date of last exposure (Day 0) to a person who is infectious with SARS-CoV-2. CDC has provided options for [shorten quarantine](#) which balances the reduced burden to the individual under quarantine against a small possibility of increasing the spread of the virus.

The following are options to shorten the 14-day quarantine:

- Quarantine can end after Day 10 without testing and if [no symptoms](#) have been reported during daily monitoring. However, it is recommended that symptom monitoring continue through Day 14.
- If diagnostic testing resources are sufficient and available, quarantine can end after Day 7 if a diagnostic specimen (i.e., RT-PCR or antigen) tests negative and if no symptoms were reported during daily monitoring.
 - The specimen must be collected and tested within 48 hours before the time of planned quarantine discontinuation (e.g., in anticipation of testing delays), [but quarantine cannot be discontinued earlier than after Day 7](#).

In order to discontinue quarantine after Day 7, specimens must be collected on or after Day 5. Specimens collected prior to this date will not be sufficient to allow quarantine to end early. Either RT-PCR or antigen tests would be acceptable testing methods for discontinuation of quarantine.

Persons can discontinue quarantine at these time points only if the following criteria are also met:

- No clinical evidence of COVID-19 has been elicited by daily symptom monitoring during the entirety of quarantine up to the time at which quarantine is discontinued; and,
- Daily symptom monitoring continues through quarantine Day 14; and,
- Persons need to adhere strictly to all recommended nonpharmaceutical interventions (e.g., masking, physical distancing) through Day 14 after exposure.
 - If any symptoms develop, they should immediately self-isolate and contact the DOH at 1-877-PA-HEALTH, their local health department, or their healthcare provider to report this change in clinical status.

Testing for the purpose of discontinuation of quarantine prior to day 10 should be considered only if it will have no impact on availability of community diagnostic testing. Testing of symptomatic persons seeking evaluation for infection must be prioritized.

Persons who have tested positive for COVID-19 within the past 3 months and recovered do not have to quarantine or get tested again as long as they do not develop new symptoms. However, masking is still recommended for unvaccinated persons. If they do become symptomatic, the person should isolate and seek testing.

DOH recommends that non-healthcare congregate settings, such as prisons and shelters, continue to follow recommendations for a 14-day quarantine period for individuals who are not fully vaccinated. COVID-19 transmission within these setting can be difficult to control, and the increased transmission risk associated with shortening the quarantine time periods may be problematic in these settings.

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

Individuals interested in receiving further PA-HANs are encouraged to register at <https://han.pa.gov/>.

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.

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This information is current as of July 30, 2021 but may be modified in the future. We will continue to post updated information regarding the most common questions about this subject.