

CDC Updates to COVID-19 Quarantine and Isolation Lengths; Including those Vaccinated

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At the onset and throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, IRMA has remained vigilant in monitoring and distributing updates from local, state, and federal authorities. As of December 2nd, 2020, the CDC updated its recommendations to reduce the 14-day quarantine to 10 days under certain circumstances. **Additionally, as of February 10th, 2021, fully vaccinated persons who meet certain criteria will no longer be required to quarantine following an exposure to someone with COVID-19.** Previously, in accordance with CDC and IDPH guidance, those suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 would only return being around others (end isolation) once two (2) tests taken 24 hours apart came back negative. The CDC removed the two (2) test protocol in August 2020. **As of December 2020, return from isolation lengths after infection can now be shortened when all outlined criteria are met.**

Note: The CDC defines Quarantine as keeping an individual who might have been exposed to COVID-19 away from others. Isolation is used to separate those infected with COVID-19 from people who are not infected.

CDC Guidance on When to End Quarantine

The CDC recommends two additional options for how long quarantine can last. Based on local availability of viral testing, for people without symptoms quarantine can end:

- On day 10 without testing; or
- On day 7 after receiving a negative test result.

After stopping quarantine, people should:

- Watch for symptoms until 14 days after exposure.
- If they have symptoms, immediately self-isolate and contact their local public health authority or healthcare provider.
- Wear a mask, stay at least 6 feet from others, wash their hands, avoid crowds, and take other steps to [prevent the spread of COVID-19](#).

The CDC continues to endorse quarantine for 14 days and recognizes that any quarantine shorter than 14 days balances reduced burden against a small possibility of spreading the virus.

CDC Interim Quarantine Guidance for Vaccinated Persons

Vaccinated persons with an exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 are not required to [quarantine](#) if they meet all of the following criteria:

- Are fully vaccinated (i.e., ≥ 2 weeks following receipt of the second dose in a 2-dose series, or ≥ 2 weeks following receipt of one dose of a single-dose vaccine); **and**
- Are within 3 months following receipt of the last dose in the series; **and**
- Have remained asymptomatic since the current COVID-19 exposure.

Persons who do not meet all 3 of the above criteria should continue to follow current [quarantine guidance](#) after exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19.

While mRNA COVID-19 vaccines have demonstrated high efficacy at preventing severe and symptomatic COVID-19, there is currently limited information on how much the vaccines might reduce transmission and how long protection lasts. In addition, the efficacy of the vaccines against emerging SARS-CoV-2 variants is not known. At this time, vaccinated persons should continue to follow [current guidance](#) to protect themselves and others, including wearing a mask, staying at least 6 feet away from others, avoiding crowds, avoiding poorly ventilated spaces, covering coughs and sneezes, washing hands often, following [CDC travel guidance](#), and following any applicable workplace or school guidance, including guidance related to personal protective equipment use or SARS-CoV-2 testing.

CDC Guidance on When to End Home Isolation:

I think or know I had COVID-19, and I had symptoms. You can be around others (end home isolation):

- **10 days** since symptoms first appeared **and**
- **24 hours** with no fever without the use of fever-reducing medications **and**
- COVID-19 symptoms have improved (for example, cough, shortness of breath)

Most people do not require testing to decide when they can be around others; however, if your healthcare provider recommends testing, they will let you know when you can resume being around others based on your test results.

*Note that these recommendations **do not** apply to persons with severe COVID-19 or with severely weakened immune systems (immunocompromised). These persons should follow the guidance below for "[I was severely ill with COVID-19 or have a severely weakened immune system \(immunocompromised\) due to a health condition or medication. When can I be around others?](#)"*

I tested positive for COVID-19 but had no symptoms:

- *If you continue to have no symptoms, you can be with others after **10 days** have passed since you had a positive viral test for COVID-19.*

Most people do not require testing to decide when they can be around others; however, if your healthcare provider recommends testing, they will let you know when you can resume being around others based on your test results.

If you develop symptoms after testing positive, follow the guidance above for "[I think or know I had COVID-19, and I had symptoms](#)."

Consistent with [CDC's recommendations](#), workers with COVID-19 symptoms should be referred to a healthcare provider for evaluation and potential testing. Waiting for test results prior to returning to work is preferred to keep potentially infected workers out of the workplace.

While the CDC has removed the 2 negative test recommendation, it does not preclude employers from requiring a negative test after 10-14 days of isolation as part of their return-to-work protocols. Data to date shows that a person who has had and recovered from COVID-19 may have low levels of virus in their bodies for up to 3 months after diagnosis. This means that if the person who has recovered from COVID-19 is retested within 3 months of the initial infection, they may continue to have a positive test result, even though they are not spreading COVID-19. Therefore, the important indicators of infection recovery are being fever free for 24 hours and an improvement in other COVID-19 symptoms. Any symptoms of COVID-19 should be reported to the employer immediately. Employees should be sent home to begin isolation and to consult their healthcare provider on initiating testing.

IRMA will continue to recommend that individuals follow the CDC's guidance for a 14-day quarantine for non-vaccinated employees and to consider the modified alternatives as acceptable options when circumstances warrant. Continue to consult with the employee's healthcare providers for guidance on further testing or isolation needs. Employers should ensure anyone returning from quarantine or isolation (regardless of their vaccination status) continue to monitor for symptoms and continue stringent social distance, hygiene, and face covering practices. All employee guidance and COVID-19 policies should be updated to reflect the CDC's current recommendations and distributed to employees.

Resources:

[CDC - Interim Clinical Considerations for Use of mRNA COVID-19 Vaccines Currently Authorized in the United States](#)

[CDC - When to Quarantine](#)

[CDC - When to Isolate](#)

[CDC - When You Can Be Around Others](#)