



What to do if you were potentially exposed to someone with confirmed coronavirus disease (COVID-19)

July 31, 2020

If you think you have been exposed to someone with COVID-19, follow the steps below to monitor your health and to avoid spreading the disease to others.

What is coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)?

COVID-19 is a respiratory disease caused by a new virus called SARS-CoV-2. Symptoms of COVID-19 can range from mild to severe (listed below) and may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. Most people with COVID-19 will have mild disease but some people will get sicker and may need to be hospitalized.

How do I know if I was exposed?

You generally need to be in close contact with a person with COVID-19 to get infected. Close contact includes:

- Living in the same household as a person with COVID-19
- Caring for a person with COVID-19
- Being within 6 feet of a person with COVID-19 for more than 15 minutes
- Being in direct contact with secretions from a person with COVID-19 (e.g., being coughed on, kissing, sharing utensils).
- Being in close contact (as described above) in the 48 hours before a person with COVID-19 developed symptoms.

If you have not been in close contact with a person who you know had COVID-19, you are at low, but not zero risk for infection. Cases of COVID-19 do occur due to community spread from people you may not know have COVID-19, which is why hand hygiene, wearing a face mask or cloth covering, and social distancing are important prevention measures.

If you have been exposed to a person with COVID-19 but not in close contact, you can continue to go to work or school but you should monitor your health for 14 days and, if you become ill, you should stay away from others and contact your health care provider.

What should I do if I am a close contact to someone with COVID-19 while they were ill, but I am not sick?

You should monitor your health for any symptoms of COVID-19 for 14 days after the last day you were in close contact with the person sick with COVID-19. COVID-19 symptoms may include fever or chills, cough, new loss of sense of smell or taste, fatigue, headache, muscle pain, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, shortness of breath or nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea. You should not go to work or school and should avoid public places for 14 days (unless you are a health care worker or work in critical infrastructure--see below). Avoid others in your home, including pets. You may be contacted for a public health interview.

If you live with someone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19, review the additional guidance for how to care safely for ill persons at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/care-for-someone.html>



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What should I do if I had close contact with someone with COVID-19, but I am not sick, and I work in critical infrastructure?

Critical infrastructure includes state and local law enforcement; 911 call center employees; Fusion Center employees; hazardous material responders; janitorial and other custodial staff; and workers in food and agriculture, critical manufacturing, informational technology, transportation, energy and government facilities.

Critical infrastructure workers who had close contact with a COVID-19 case can continue to work as long as they remain well without symptoms and if they take the following measures:

- **Pre-screen.** Have temperature and symptom check daily before starting work.
- **Wear a cloth face covering.** Use always at work.
- **Social distance.** As much as possible, remain at least 6 feet away from coworkers.
- **Disinfect and clean workspaces.** Increase frequency of cleaning surfaces and items touched or handled often.
- **Do not share** headsets, phones, food, or drinks.

Follow these measures for 14 days after you were last in close contact with a person with COVID-19. Notify your employer and go home immediately if you become sick. Your employer should coordinate with the local health department for guidance. For additional information visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/critical-workers/implementing-safety-practices.html>

What should I do if I had close contact with someone with COVID-19, but I am not sick, and I am a health care worker?

If possible, you should stay home for 14 days after you were last exposed to this person and monitor for symptoms. If it is not feasible due to staffing needs and if you are asymptomatic, you can return to work. Your workplace must meet specific criteria to determine there is a staffing crisis. If you do work, you should monitor your temperature and for signs of respiratory illness before starting work and for every four hours during your shift. Wear a mask while performing clinical duties for 14 days after your exposure and do not provide patient care to severely immunocompromised patients (e.g., transplant, hematology-oncology).

If you are affiliated with a facility, employee health services will help you to assess your risk and make appropriate recommendations. For additional information visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/healthcare-facilities/hcp-return-work.html>.

What should I do if I am a close contact to someone with COVID-19 and get sick?

Currently, anyone with COVID-19 symptoms is encouraged to be tested. COVID-19 testing sites can be found on the Illinois Department of Public Health website at <http://dph.illinois.gov/testing>.

If you are over 65 years of age, pregnant, or have medical conditions, you may be at higher risk of COVID-19 complications. Contact your physician's office and tell them you were exposed to someone with COVID-19. They may want to monitor your health more closely.



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If you do not have a higher risk condition but want medical advice, call your health care provider and inform them you were exposed to someone with COVID-19. Your health care provider can help you decide if you need to be evaluated. Testing is recommended for persons with symptoms of COVID-19.

You can contact a free [remote health monitoring program](#) for additional guidance or refer to the IDPH and CDC guidance for COVID-19 cases.

Stay home to protect others from getting sick

If you get sick with fever, cough, shortness of breath, or [other symptoms consistent with COVID-19](#) (even if your symptoms are very mild), you should stay at home and away from other people for a minimum of 10 days AND until your symptoms are resolving AND you have had no fever (without taking fever-reducing medication) for at least 24 hours.

If you need immediate medical attention

If you experience any of the following warning signs, seek immediate medical care:

- Trouble breathing
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- New confusion
- Inability to wake or stay awake
- Bluish lips or face

If you have a medical emergency and need to call 911, notify the dispatch personnel you may have been exposed to COVID-19. If possible, put on a face mask before emergency medical services arrive or immediately after they arrive.

CDC Resource: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/index.html>