



STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN RESOURCES

Bureau for Public Health

Office of Epidemiology and Prevention Services

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INFORMATION UPDATE

TO: All ChexOut Users

FROM: Amy Atkins, Director
Office of Epidemiology and Prevention Services

DATE: December 7, 2020

RE: Releasing Contacts from Quarantine

This guidance supersedes previous guidance released on 12/4/20.

Quarantine Period

Quarantine is used to separate someone who might have been exposed to COVID-19 and may develop illness away from other people. Quarantine helps prevent spread of disease that can occur before a person knows they have the virus. On December 2, 2020, CDC released guidance for acceptable alternatives to the 14-day quarantine which allows a shortened quarantine period based on local circumstances and resources. CDC and DHHR recognizes that any quarantine shorter than 14 days balances reduced burden against a small possibility of increasing the spread of the virus.

When the recommendation for a 14-day quarantine was established it was based on estimates of upper bounds of the COVID-19 incubation period. This importance grew as public health officials learned that persons could transmit SARS-CoV-2 before symptoms develop, and a substantial proportion of infected persons never develop symptoms but can still transmit the virus. However, a 14-day quarantine period can impose personal burdens that may affect physical and mental health as well as economic hardship that may reduce compliance. As cases in West Virginia are rapidly increasing, the number of contacts needing quarantined also increases exponentially, placing additional burden on local health departments (LHD). Lastly, the prospect of quarantine may discourage recently diagnosed persons from naming contacts and may discourage contacts from responding to a health department contact tracer if they perceive the length of quarantine as burdensome.

Reducing the length of quarantine is intended to reduce burden on LHD and may increase community compliance. Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR) has weighed the quarantine options and recommends LHDs educate persons who have been

exposed to COVID-19 on their options to quarantine and so individuals can choose their option based on their own personal burden and level of risk.

Releasing Individuals from Quarantine

CDC and DHHR currently recommends a quarantine period of 14 days. Any contact who is capable of maintaining a 14-day quarantine in order to provide the lowest risk of transmission to family members, coworkers, and others should. However, if an individual is unable to quarantine for that length of time acceptable options to shorten quarantine are available.

Duration of quarantine applies from the last date of exposure to an infectious case (Day 0).

Option 1: Quarantine period can end after Day 14 without testing (post-quarantine transmission risk is 0%-3%):

- Day 0-14 quarantine for close contacts can end if no symptoms develop during the daily self-monitoring and without testing.
- Persons quarantined for 14 days without testing per existing recommendations.
- This option maximally reduces risk of post-quarantine transmission risk and is the strategy with the greatest collective experience at present.
- This is recommended in settings where there are high-risk individuals and closed congregate settings.

Option 2: (Quarantine period can end after Day 10 without testing and if no symptoms have been identified during daily self-monitoring (post-quarantine transmission risk is 1%-10%):

- Day 0-10 quarantine for close contacts can end if no symptoms develop during the daily self-monitoring without testing.
- Self-monitoring and mask wearing should be continued through day 14.
- If an individual develops symptoms within the 14-day exposure period, immediately isolate and contact public health to report change in clinical status.
- Persons should be educated on correct and consistent mask use, social distancing, cough hygiene, environmental cleaning and disinfection, avoiding crowds, ensuring adequate indoor ventilation and self-monitoring for symptoms.

Option 3: Quarantine period can end after Day 7 if someone tests negative (PCR or Antigen test) and if no symptoms have been identified during daily self-monitoring (post-quarantine transmission risk is 5%-12%):

- Day 0-7 quarantine for close contact can end if COVID-19 test is negative and if no symptoms develop during the daily self-monitoring.
- Should only be considered when testing resources are available.
- Specimen may be collected and tested within 48 hours before the time of planned quarantine discontinuation.
- Self-monitoring and mask wearing should be continued through day 14.
- If an individual develops symptoms within the 14-day exposure period, immediately isolate and contact public health to report change in clinical status.

- Persons should be educated on correct and consistent mask use, social distancing, cough hygiene, environmental cleaning and disinfection, avoiding crowds, ensuring adequate indoor ventilation and self-monitoring for symptoms.

Exceptions

The variability of SARS-CoV-2 transmission observed to-date indicates that while a shorter quarantine substantially reduces secondary transmission risk, there are settings where even a small risk of post-quarantine transmission could still result in substantial transmission. A 14-day quarantine period should remain in effect for individuals living in high-risk congregate settings or among individuals who are unable to wear a mask correctly and consistently. These settings include:

- Residents in nursing homes, assisted living facilities, or other long-term care facilities.
- Inmates in correctional facilities.

Household Contacts

A household contact is an individual who shares any living spaces with a case. This includes bedrooms, bathrooms, living rooms, kitchens, etc. Household contacts must be quarantined after exposure to a case, regardless of whether the case is symptomatic.

When does quarantine start?

Household contacts must quarantine as long as they are exposed to the case, and for 7-14-day period beyond their last exposure.

If the contact can separate from the case within the home, then they are no longer exposed. Separation must include:

- The case must never be in the same room as household members.
- The case cannot share plates, cups, dishes or phones with household members.
- The case should have their own bathroom. If that isn't possible, the household must conduct daily cleaning.

If the contact cannot separate from the case within the home, the contact must quarantine for the case's (minimum) 10-day isolation period plus an additional 7-14 days.

When does quarantine end?

Once exposure is no longer occurring (either the case has completed their 10-day isolation or the case and contact have separated within the home), then quarantine can end:

- After Day 14, as recommended by DHHR and CDC
- After Day 10, (returning to regular activities on Day 11) without testing if the contact does not have symptoms.
- After Day 7 (returning to regular activities on Day 8) if the contact does not have symptoms and if they test negative by PCR or antigen test after Day 5.

Contacts should continue to self-monitor for symptoms and wear a face mask through Day 14. Mask wearing is especially important through Day 14 and should continue beyond the quarantine period.

If a household contact develops symptoms of COVID-19, they become a case. They should begin isolation as a case and consider getting tested.

Non-Household Contacts

Non-household contacts must be quarantined after exposure* to a case, regardless of whether the case was symptomatic. DHHR and CDC recommend a 14-day quarantine. Acceptable alternatives to a 14-day quarantine include:

- After Day 10, (returning to regular activities on Day 11) without testing if the contact does not have symptoms.
- After Day 7 (returning to regular activities on Day 8) if the contact does not have symptoms and if they test negative by PCR or antigen test after Day 5.

Contacts should continue to self-monitor for symptoms and wear a face mask through Day 14. Mask wearing is especially important through Day 14 and should continue beyond the quarantine period.

*Exposure means contact with a case during the time period beginning two days prior to the case's symptom onset (or specimen collection date if case never experiences symptoms) through the end of the case's isolation period.

Contact Tracing

Contact tracing should be conducted for close contacts of confirmed or probable COVID-19 case-patients. Close contacts will continue to be traced, notified, and educated; however, LHD are not required to perform daily monitoring of contacts.

Contact tracing staff should make initial contact immediately upon notification to assess the health status of the contact, offer quarantine options, available testing opportunities, and provide education about COVID-19, self-quarantine, and self-monitoring.

1. Initial communication with identified contacts should still occur within 72 hours of receipt of laboratory report of the associated case.

- To ensure confidentiality of both the case-patient and the contact, the following guidelines must be followed:
 - Verify the identification of the contact by asking them to provide their full name, date of birth and phone number.
 - The name of the COVID-19 case-patient should not be disclosed to the contact.
- At least three attempts should be made to contact the individual, each on different days and different times. A certified letter should also be sent to the contact if their address is known.
- Documentation of at least three attempts and a mailed certified letter (if address was available) will still be required if submitting as lost to follow-up (LTFU).
- Contact tracers are strongly encouraged to use Ring Central for all communications to ensure time and date of attempted contacts are documented automatically in ChexOut. ChexOut has an automated text, email and phone

feature that can be used to make these contacts and to facilitate mailing the certified letter. Instructions can be found in the ChexOut Job Aid.

2. Provide COVID-19 education to contacts.

- COVID-19 is a contagious disease that is spread primarily through respiratory droplets. It is usually a short-term illness that causes you to be sick for a few days to weeks. However, in some persons, COVID-19 can be very serious and can cause pneumonia and death.
- COVID-19 is usually spread person-to-person when you ingest or inhale the virus through respiratory droplets in the air or from contaminated objects/surfaces you touch. COVID-19 can also spread from close contact with an infected person or caring for someone who is ill.
- Contacts can prevent others from getting sick by staying home (except to get medical care), avoiding public areas and transportation, staying away from others, limiting contact with pets and animals, wearing a facemask, covering their coughs and sneezes, cleaning their hands often, avoiding sharing household items (wash thoroughly after use), and cleaning all “high touch” surfaces every day.
- Provide CDC’s fact sheet “Steps to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 if you are sick”: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/sick-with-2019-nCoV-fact-sheet.pdf>.

3. LHDs educate persons who have been exposed to COVID-19. DHHR and CDC recommends a 14-day quarantine. Persons should be educated on acceptable options to quarantine if a 14-day quarantine is not possible.

4. All close contacts should always be asked to monitor themselves daily for symptoms and contact the LHD immediately if symptoms develop for 14 days.

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| • Nasal congestion | • Rigors |
| • Malaise | • Shortness of breath (dyspnea) |
| • Subjective fever (felt feverish) | • Loss of sense of smell |
| • Difficulty breathing | • Abdominal pain |
| • Muscle aches (myalgia) | • Loss of appetite |
| • Nausea or vomiting | • Fatigue |
| • Fever >100.4F (38C) | • Cough (new onset or worsening of chronic cough) |
| • Chest pain | • Runny nose (rhinorrhea) |
| • Wheezing | • Chills |
| • Sore throat | • Headache |
| • Diarrhea (>3 loose/looser than normal stools /24 hr period) | • Loss of sense of taste |

Provide the contact with the phone number for the LHD and the point of contact if one has been identified for that LHD. Educate the contact that if they develop any symptoms of COVID-19 it is very important that they notify their LHD immediately as this will impact the recommendations for the contact’s safe release from quarantine.