



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
CDC 24/7: Saving Lives, Protecting People™

# Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)



## COVID-19 Contact Tracing Communications Toolkit for Health Departments

Updated Nov. 5, 2020

[Print](#)

## Summary of Changes

### Revisions made on October 21, 2020

- Added links to the updated close contact definition.
- Updated language to align with updated definition.

**This page will be updated as new resources become available.**

## Main message

We all need to work together to help slow the spread of COVID-19. Contact tracing slows the spread of COVID-19 by

- Letting people know they may have been exposed to COVID-19 and should monitor their health for signs and [symptoms](#) of COVID-19.
- Helping people who may have been exposed to COVID-19 get tested.
- Asking people to [self-isolate](#) if they have COVID-19 or [self-quarantine](#) if they are a [close contact](#) of someone who has COVID-19.

**The messages in this toolkit use COVID-19, but you may want to use “coronavirus”** instead of COVID-19 if that’s the term most often used in your community.

**The bottom line:** Making a choice to help your health department in the fight against COVID-19 helps protect you, your family, and your community.

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## Health Marketing Messaging Examples

Consider developing promotional messages to incorporate in communications to your community. Examples are included below.

- **Answer the call to slow the spread.\***
- **Cancel COVID.**
- **Choose to be part of the solution: slow the spread.**

\* Credit: [Massachusetts Community Tracing Collaborative](#) 



### Protect Your Health This Flu Season

Getting a flu vaccine during 2020-2021 is more important than ever because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Flu vaccination is especially important for people who are at high risk from flu; many of whom are also at high risk for COVID-19 or serious outcomes.

[People at High Risk For Flu Complications](#)

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## Talking points

### General messages

- We all need to work together with health department staff to slow the spread of COVID-19.
- Be part of the solution and answer the phone – it may be the health department calling to let you know you're test result came back positive for SARS-Cov-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, or that you've been in [contact](#) with someone who has it. This phone call is just one small part of what is known as contact tracing.
- Working with the health department is the best way to protect your family and friends from COVID-19.
- Your immediate actions can help make all of us safer. This may include staying home and away from others.
- Contact tracing for COVID-19 works best with [everyday preventive actions](#).
  - This means actions such as washing your hands often, avoiding [close contact](#), and covering your mouth and nose with a mask when around others. Doing so can slow the spread of COVID-19. It is especially important before a vaccine or better treatments become widely available.

# Messages for people who have been around someone with COVID-19

If you have been around someone with COVID-19 (also known as a “[close contact](#)”), someone from the health department may call to tell you that you have been exposed to COVID-19. They will ask you to stay at home, away from others and [self-quarantine](#).

- For COVID-19, a [close contact](#) is anyone who is within 6 feet of an infected person for a total of 15 minutes. An infected person can spread COVID-19 starting from 48 hours (or 2 days) before the person has any symptoms or tests positive for SARS-Cov-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.
- Stay at home away from others and self-quarantine for 14 days after you were last around someone with COVID-19. Health department staff will help identify the dates of your self-quarantine. They can also provide resources about COVID-19 testing in your area.
  - Self-quarantine means staying home, monitoring your health, and maintaining social distancing (at least 6 feet) from others at all times.
  - If you need to be around other people or animals in or outside of the home, wear a mask. This will help protect the people around you.
  - If you need support or assistance with self-quarantine, then your health department or a local community organization may be able to provide assistance.
  - Self-quarantine helps slow the spread of COVID-19 and can help keep your family, friends, and other people you have been around from possibly getting COVID-19.
- Take your temperature twice a day, monitor yourself for any [symptoms](#) of COVID-19, and notify your health department if you develop symptoms. Seek medical care if symptoms worsen or become [severe](#).
- Discussions with health department staff are **confidential**. This means that your personal and medical information will be kept private and only shared with those who may need to know, like your health care provider.
- Your name will not be shared with those you came in [contact](#) with, even if they ask. The health department will only notify people you were recently around that they might have been exposed to COVID-19.
- Your information will be collected for health purposes only and should not be shared with any other agencies, like law enforcement or immigration.

# Messages for people who are waiting for a COVID-19 test result

- If you think you may have COVID-19 and are [waiting for a COVID-19 test result](#), stay home and monitor your health to protect your friends, family and others from possibly getting COVID-19.
- Think about the people you have recently been around.
  - While you wait for your COVID-19 test result, think about everyone you have been around recently. This will be important information to have available. If

your test is positive, someone from the health department may call you to check on your health, discuss who you have been around, and ask where you spent time while you may have been able to spread COVID-19 to others.

- Answer the phone call from the health department.
  - If the health department calls you, answer the call to help slow the spread of COVID-19 in your community.
    - Discussions with health department staff are **confidential**. This means that your personal and medical information will be kept private and only shared with those who may need to know, like your health care provider.
    - Your name will not be shared with those you came in [contact](#) with, even if they ask. The health department will only notify people you were in [close contact](#) with (within 6 feet for a total of 15 minutes) that they might have been exposed to COVID-19.
    - Your information will be collected for health purposes only and should not be shared with any other agencies, like law enforcement or immigration.

## Messages for people diagnosed with COVID-19

- If you are diagnosed with COVID-19, someone from the health department may call you to check on your health, discuss who you have been around, and ask where you have spent time while you may have been able to spread COVID-19 to others. The health department and community organizations may be able to help connect people to services during self-isolation.
- Discussions with health department staff are **confidential**. This means that your personal and medical information will be kept private and only shared with those who may need to know, like your health care provider.
- Your name will not be shared with those you came in [contact](#) with, even if they ask. The health department will only notify people you were in [close contact](#) with (within 6 feet for a total of 15 minutes) that they might have been exposed to COVID-19.
- Your information will be collected for health purposes only and should not be shared with any other agencies, like law enforcement or immigration.
- Health department staff will ask you to stay at home away from others and [self-isolate](#), if you are not doing so already.
  - Self-isolation means staying at home in a specific room away from other people and pets, and using a separate bathroom, if possible.
  - Self-isolation is critical to protecting those who you live with as well as your community.
  - Self-isolation helps slow the spread of COVID-19 and can help keep your family, neighbors, and other [close contacts](#) from possibly getting COVID-19.
  - If you need support or assistance while self-isolating, then your health department or a local community organization may be able to provide assistance.
- Seek medical care if your symptoms worsen or become severe. Severe symptoms include trouble breathing, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, confusion, inability to wake or stay awake, or bluish lips or face.

# Contact tracing works best with everyday preventive actions

- [Everyday preventive actions](#) taken by people and communities can slow the spread of COVID-19. This is especially important before a vaccine or better treatments become widely available.
- Preventative actions means that you:
  - Wash your hands often,
  - Avoid [close contact](#),
  - Cover your mouth and nose with a mask when around others, and
  - Cover your coughs and sneezes.

## Key actions

- Pick up the phone when the health department calls.
- Follow health department guidance.
- Tell a healthcare provider and the health department if you become ill.
- Call a healthcare provider if you start to feel ill and you have not been tested for COVID-19.
- If you have been around someone with COVID-19 ([close contact](#)), stay at home away from others and self-quarantine for 14 days, starting from the last day that you were possibly exposed to COVID-19. Monitor yourself for symptoms of COVID-19.
- **Tell those who you had [close contact](#) with recently if you become ill, so that they can monitor their health.**
- Know what symptoms mean you need to go to the hospital right away.
- Seek medical care if symptoms worsen or become severe. Severe symptoms include trouble breathing, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, confusion, inability to wake or stay awake, or bluish lips or face.

## Messages around stigma

- People can fight stigma by providing social support in situations where you notice this is occurring.
- Stigma affects the emotional or [mental health](#) of stigmatized groups and the communities they live in.
- Stopping stigma is important to making communities and community members resilient. See [resources on mental health and coping during COVID-19](#).
- Everyone can help stop stigma related to COVID-19 by [knowing the facts](#) and sharing them with others in your community.

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## Sample public service announcements

## 15 second

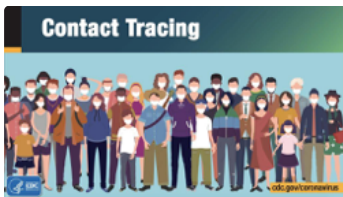
The [insert health department name] is working hard to slow the spread of COVID-19. If you have been around someone with COVID-19, someone from the health department may call you and ask you to self-quarantine at home away from others. Help us slow transmission and **answer the call to slow the spread of COVID-19**.

## 30 second

The [insert health department name] is working hard to slow the spread of COVID-19. If you have been around someone with COVID-19, someone from the health department may call you. Self-quarantine at home and follow our instructions. Making a choice to help us in the fight against COVID-19 helps protect you, your family, and your community. Help us slow transmission and **answer the call to slow the spread of COVID-19**. For more information, visit [insert URL]. This is a message from the [insert health department name].

Find [additional PSAs](#) about everyday prevention actions, COVID-19 readiness, cleaning and disinfection, and more.

### Video



#### Answer the Call – Contact Tracing Video

This 1-minute long animation video with voiceover informs the public about contact tracing and why they should answer and respond to a call from a contact tracer.

## Sample graphics



What to Expect if You Have Been Exposed to COVID-19






What to Expect if You Have Been Diagnosed with COVID-19



Multi-Use Contact Tracing Images

# Sample social media posts

## Twitter

- We can work together to help slow the spread of #COVID19. You can do your part by answering your phone if someone from the health department calls and self-quarantining, if exposed. Learn more: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/contact-tracing.html>
- You can help your health department in the fight against #COVID19 to help protect you, your family, and your community. Answer the call to slow the spread: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/Contact-Tracing-Infographic-FINAL.pdf> 
- If you are waiting for a test result, stay home away from others and monitor your health. Think about who you have been around and tell them they may have been exposed. Answer the call to #SlowtheSpread of #COVID19: [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/php/318271-A\\_FS\\_KeyStepsWhenWaitingForCOVID-19Results\\_3.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/php/318271-A_FS_KeyStepsWhenWaitingForCOVID-19Results_3.pdf) 
- Contact tracing slows the spread of #COVID19. See these answers to Frequently Asked Questions about contact tracing: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html#Contact-Tracing>. #SlowTheSpread
- If you are sick with #COVID19, the health department may contact you to check on your health, discuss who you've been in [contact](#) with, and ask you to stay at home away from others and self-isolate, if you're not doing so already. Find out more about the steps of contact tracing: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/Contact-Tracing-Infographic-FINAL.pdf> 


## Facebook

- We can work together to help slow the spread of COVID-19. If you have been exposed to someone with COVID-19, we will call you and ask you to self-quarantine at home away from others for 14 days from the last day that you were exposed. Do your part to help protect your family and your community: answer the call to slow the spread. Learn more: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/contact-tracing.html>
- If you have been around someone with COVID-19, someone from [*insert health department name*] might call you to tell you that you've been exposed and ask you to stay at home away from others and self-quarantine. Staying at home helps protect you, your family, and your community. Choose to be part of the solution and help slow the spread of COVID-19: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/contact-tracing.html>
- If you are sick with COVID-19, someone from [*insert health department name*] might call you to check on your health, discuss who you've been in [contact](#) with, and ask you to stay at home away from others to self-isolate. This information is collected for health purposes only and should not be shared with any other agencies, like law enforcement or immigration. Your name will not be revealed to those you came in [contact](#) with. Do your part to help protect your family and your community from



COVID-19: answer the call to slow the spread. Learn more:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/contact-tracing.html>

- If you have been around someone with COVID-19, someone from [*insert health department name*] might call you to tell you that you may have been exposed to COVID-19 and ask you to stay at home away from others and self-quarantine. Choose to be part of the solution and help us slow the spread of COVID-19: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/Contact-Tracing-Infographic-FINAL.pdf> 

## Instagram

- Heard about contact tracing, but not sure what it is? During the pandemic, the health department follows up with and interviews people who have COVID-19 and their [contacts](#). Contact tracing slows the spread of COVID-19. If you have been around a person who has COVID-19, someone from the health department may call to let you know you've been exposed and ask you to stay at home away from others and self-quarantine. Doing so helps protect you, your family, and your community. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html#Contact-Tracing> #PublicHealth #COVID19 #ContactTracing #SlowTheSpread #quarantine

More Sample Social Media Posts: [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/social-media-toolkit.html#anchor\\_1594149060494](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/social-media-toolkit.html#anchor_1594149060494)

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## Questions and answers

### **What information will you share with people I've been around recently if I have COVID-19?**

Your name will not be shared with those you came in [contact](#) with. We will only tell people who you have been around recently that they might have been exposed to COVID-19. **Any information you share with health department staff is confidential.** This means that your name, personal, and medical information will be kept private.

### **I was recently around someone who has COVID-19, but I feel fine. Why should I stay at home?**

People with COVID-19 can still spread the virus even if they don't have any symptoms. If you were around someone who had COVID-19, it is critical that you stay home away from others for 14 days from the last day that you were around that person. Staying home away from others at all times helps your health department in the fight against COVID-19 helps protect you, your family, and your community.

### **What do I do if I feel sick?**

If you become ill, tell your health department. You should also tell people you were around recently, so they can monitor their health. Tell anyone who you were within 6 feet of for 15 minutes or more in the two days before you first developed COVID-19

symptoms. If your symptoms worsen or become severe, seek medical care. Severe symptoms include trouble breathing, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, confusion, inability to wake or stay awake, or bluish lips or face.

## Additional considerations

To ensure community engagement and trust, health departments should be prepared to provide answers to some of the following questions based on jurisdiction-specific policies and resources. Please tailor these messages as appropriate.

- **How can I be sure that my health information is secure?**
- **How will my health information be used?**
- **How long will my health information be stored and protected?**
- **Will the health department share information with others?**
- **How do I know that the person calling is from the health department?**
- **What options or opportunities are there for quarantine and isolation for those who are unable to self-isolate at home?**
- **If I need help with self-isolating and self-quarantining, what services are offered?**
- **What financial assistance is available for people who are asked to stay home but can't telework or don't have sick leave?**

[Contact Tracing Frequently Asked Questions and Answers](#)

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## Additional resources



## Contact Tracing Steps Infographic (PDF)

What you can expect to happen during contact tracing if you have been diagnosed with COVID-19

### Additional Languages:

[Chinese](#) | [Korean](#) | [Marshallese](#) | [Spanish](#) | [Vietnamese](#)



## 3 Steps to Take While Waiting for Your COVID-19 Test Results (PDF)

To help stop the spread of COVID-19, take these 3 key steps now while waiting for your test results

### Additional Languages:

[Chinese](#) | [Korean](#) | [Marshallese](#) | [Spanish](#) | [Vietnamese](#)

Find other print resources that are being used to support COVID-19 recommendations.

## Related Links

### CDC Resources

[Contact Tracing Frequently Asked Questions and Answers](#)

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[Overview of Contact Tracing](#)

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[Contact Tracing Resources for Health Departments](#)

### Resources from other organizations

Content describing non-CDC tools on this site is provided for informational purposes only and is not intended to indicate endorsement, actual or implied, of the tools. Additionally, information on this site is provided “as is,” for users to evaluate and make their own determination as to their effectiveness.

[Federal Trade Commission: COVID-19 contact tracing text message scams](#) 

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[Resolve to Save Lives: COVID-19 Contact Tracing Playbook Communications Webpage](#)  


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[Coronavirus Response Campaign](#) 

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