

September 4, 2020

Quarantine Guidance: What to do if you were exposed to someone with COVID-19

COVID-19 is a respiratory disease caused by a new virus called SARS-CoV-2. The most common symptoms of the disease are fever, cough, and shortness of breath. Other symptoms may also include fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, or diarrhea. Most people with COVID-19 will have mild disease, but some people will get sicker and may need to be hospitalized. If you have contracted the virus, symptoms may develop within 2 to 14 days from exposure. Unless precautions are taken, your health is at risk, and other people may possibly contract this disease from you.

You will be contacted by the Georgia Department of Public Health if we have determined that you have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 or if a close contact of yours supplied your information because they tested positive for COVID-19. In order to prevent the spread of disease, and help advise you if you do develop symptoms of COVID-19, please respond to the phone call from public health. Additionally, if you are reviewing this information online because you know, or believe, that you are a close contact of a COVID-19 case but have not yet been contacted by DPH, please follow the guidance below.

It is very important for your own safety and for the safety of others that you monitor your health for 14 days from your last possible exposure to COVID-19, and that you remain at home, avoid congregate settings and public activities, and practice social distancing. You are required to cooperate fully with all state and federal public health authorities, including the Georgia Department of Public Health, and to follow the measures outlined below. The Georgia Administrative Order for Public Health Control Measures can be found here:

<https://dph.georgia.gov/document/document/secondamendedaoiq41201pdf/download>

Specifically, you agree to:

If you are not sick, you agree to monitor your health for fever, cough and shortness of breath during the 14 days after the last day you were in close contact with the sick person with COVID-19.

- Check your temperature twice a day and watch for symptoms.
- Quarantine yourself at home except in case of emergency or to be tested for COVID-19.
 - If you are a health care provider, emergency medical services worker, first responder, or other critical infrastructure worker, you may continue to work, in consultation with your workplace occupational health program and if necessary to ensure adequate staffing, if you have no symptoms, wear a mask while on duty, and remain at home at all other times.

- If possible, stay away from other people living in your home, especially those who are at high risk for getting very sick from COVID-19: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/index.html>
- When you are contacted by the public health, enroll in active monitoring. Through active monitoring, you will report your temperature and any symptoms to the Georgia Department of Public Health each day, either by responding to a text message or calling 1-888-357-0169 if you are unable to text.
- If you have not been contacted by public health, but feel you have been in contact with COVID-19, please call 1-888-357-0169.

** A person who has clinically recovered from COVID-19 and then is identified as a contact of a new case within 3 months of symptom onset or first positive test of their most recent illness does not need to be quarantined as discussed in this document. However, if a person is identified as a contact of a new case 3 months or more after symptom onset or first positive test, they should follow quarantine recommendations for contacts.*

COVID-19 Testing. You should obtain a test for COVID-19 at least once during your quarantine. If you have no symptoms, the test should take place on the 10th day of quarantine. You should obtain a test earlier in your quarantine if you experience any of the following symptoms:

- Fever (measured temperature above 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit, or you feel feverish)
- Chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

Call your local health department to schedule testing. You can find contact information for your health department here: <https://dph.georgia.gov/covidtesting>. **Please note that even if your test results are negative, you still must remain in quarantine for the entire 14 days.** If you develop symptoms of COVID-19 at any point during your quarantine period, please also follow the guidance below “What should I do if I am a close contact to someone with COVID-19 and get sick?”.

If you seek a COVID-19 test during your quarantine, and you have not received results by day 14 of your quarantine, it is recommended that you do not return to work or school until those results are available. If your results are still pending after your 14-day quarantine is complete, and you decide to return to school or work, we recommend that you take extra care with prevention measures to avoid exposure to others in case your test result comes back as positive.

If you receive a positive COVID-19 test regardless of your symptom status, you must follow DPH isolation guidelines <https://dph.georgia.gov/isolation-contact>.

How may I have been exposed?

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

- Living in the same household as a sick person with COVID-19;
- Caring for a sick person with COVID-19;
- Being within 6 feet of a sick person with COVID-19 for a total of 15 minutes*; OR,
- Being in direct contact with secretions from a sick person with COVID-19 (e.g., being coughed on, kissing, sharing utensils, etc.).

*Recommendations may vary on the length of time of exposure, but a total of 15 minutes of close exposure can be used as an operational definition. Data are insufficient to precisely define the duration or length of time for prolonged exposure. Additionally there is little data to determine the effect of multiple short term exposures (when the cumulative exposure equals or exceeds 15 minutes). Brief interactions are less likely to result in transmission; however, the type of interaction (e.g., did the infected person cough directly in another person's face or did the infected person engage in high-exertion exercise with others) remain important. Individuals who are unable to maintain social distance from others throughout the day (e.g., individuals have multiple exposures to a case and either are unable to calculate total time exposed or exposure equal or exceed 15 minutes in total) will be considered a close contact. If a person clearly meets definitions as a “close contact”, that person should follow quarantine guidance prior to public health assessment. If there are questions Public Health will perform a risk assessment to determine who is considered a close contact if the duration or type of contact is in question.

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

If you develop symptoms of COVID-19 (even if your symptoms are very mild), you must stay at home and away from other people.

- Call 911 immediately if you believe you are experiencing a medical emergency. You must inform 911 that you may be sick with COVID-19 and wear a face covering.
- If it is not an emergency, but you are sick and require medical care, please contact your primary care doctor, an urgent care clinic, or your local federally qualified healthcare center.
- If you are mildly ill and do not require medical care, you can schedule testing by calling your local health department. You can find contact information for your health department here: <https://dph.georgia.gov/covidtesting>
- In order to prevent spreading COVID-19 it is critical that you follow the isolation instructions found here: <https://dph.georgia.gov/isolation-contact>
- The information provided here is not intended or implied to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment.

Return to Work Guidance After Exposure

- If you are a Healthcare Worker, please follow guidance from DPH
<https://dph.georgia.gov/document/document/dph-return-work-guidance/download>
- If you do not work in a healthcare setting, please follow guidance from DPH
<https://dph.georgia.gov/document/document/dph-covid-19-return-work-guidance-after-covid-19-illness-or-exposure-persons-not/download>

CDC guidance: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html>

Contact information for the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH): 1-866-PUB-HLTH (782-4584)