



Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LAC DPH) Instructions for COVID-19 Cases (Isolation) and Close Contacts

Key Highlights

1/11/2024:

- On January 9, 2024, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) updated its [State Public Health Officer Order for COVID-19 Disease Control and Prevention](#) and related guidance documents, and) and Cal/OSHA updated its [COVID-19 Prevention Non-Emergency Regulations](#) for workplaces. These updates reflect changes to isolation guidance for persons who test positive, recommended testing for close contacts, and the definition of “infectious period” for isolation and exclusion purposes.
- The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LAC DPH) advises all LA County residents to continue taking steps to reduce COVID-19 transmission. To reduce the spread of COVID-19, LAC DPH maintains the following local health protective measures in place:
 - **Masking for persons with COVID:** All individuals with COVID-19 need to wear a well-fitting, high-quality mask for a total of 10 days after their symptoms began or, if they do not have symptoms, the date of their initial positive test, whenever they are around others. This includes individuals who test positive and have no symptoms or only mild symptoms.
 - **Testing for close contacts:** With easy access to at-home testing for COVID-19, it is important for individuals to assess their status if they have respiratory symptoms or had a known exposure to a person infected with COVID-19. We advise everyone who is a close contact to a confirmed case to test immediately if they have symptoms and within 3- 5 days of their last exposure date if they are not symptomatic.
 - **Infectious period for COVID-19:** The infectious period for COVID-19 has not changed. Individuals with COVID-19 are considered infectious starting 2 days before their symptoms began and for 10 days after symptoms began or the first positive test if no symptoms. This is why it is important for anyone who tests positive to wear a well-fitting, high-quality mask whenever around others for 10 days after initial symptoms or first positive test if they do not have symptoms.
- In alignment with the updated CDPH and Cal/OSHA guidance, LAC DPH is defining the isolation period as described below:
 - **Isolation period for COVID-19:** Isolation separates people with a contagious disease from people who are not infected; it slows the spread of flu, RSV, COVID-19, and other respiratory illnesses. Individuals with COVID-19 who have symptoms shall stay home away from others until fever free for 24 hours without using fever-reducing medication AND other symptoms are mild and improving. Individuals with COVID-19 who leave isolation before 10 days from symptom onset or the date of their first positive test if no symptoms need to wear a mask when around others. Individuals who tested positive for COVID-19 and have no symptoms are not required to isolate provided they wear a well-fitting, high-quality respiratory mask whenever around other people for 10 days following their positive test result.





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Introduction

Respiratory viruses including influenza, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), and COVID-19 are widely circulating and reasonable precautions must continue to prevent community spread. Additionally, COVID-19 continues posing more risk of serious health consequences, including severe illness, hospitalization, and death, particularly for older adults and persons with weakened immune systems.

This document outlines the precautions persons with COVID-19 and persons who are a close contact of a person infected with COVID-19 must take to prevent the unintentional spread of COVID-19 to others.

These guidelines apply to both the general public and non-healthcare workplace settings.

Businesses, organizations, and schools can continue to have more protective policies to protect their employees, students, and customers, including adhering to the prior guidance on isolation for individuals with COVID-19 and instructions for persons who are close contacts.

Workplaces

Workplace settings are subject to the [Cal/OSHA COVID-19 Non-Emergency Regulations](#). In workplaces where there is occupational exposure to aerosol transmissible disease, employers are required to follow the [Cal/OSHA Aerosol Transmissible Diseases \(ATD\) Standard](#) for employees who are identified in the employer's ATD Exposure Control Plan. Employers must adhere to the COVID-19 Non-Emergency Regulations for employees not covered in the employer's ATD Exposure Control Plan.

Employers must adhere to the State Public Health Officer Order and Isolation Guidance for employees with COVID-19. This includes the requirement to exclude symptomatic employees based on a symptom-based exclusion approach and the requirement for all COVID-19 positive employees to wear respiratory masks until 10 days have passed since their COVID-19 symptoms began or, for those who remain asymptomatic, until 10 days have passed from the date of their first positive COVID-19 test. Additional information about requirements for covered workplaces may be found in [COVID-19 Prevention Non-Emergency Regulations FAQs](#). Refer to LA County [Responding to COVID-19 in the Workplace](#) for details.

In addition, specified Healthcare Facilities must follow the most recent State All Facilities Letter (AFL) related to Quarantine and Isolation for Health Care Personnel (HCP) Exposed to SARS-CoV-2 and Return to Work for HCP with COVID-19.





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Definitions

Isolation: Separates those infected with a contagious disease from people who are not infected.

Confirmed case: A person who has received a positive result of the presence of SARS-CoV-2 virus as confirmed by a COVID-19 viral test or clinical diagnosis.

Close contact: The term "Close Contact" refers to the following:

- **In indoor spaces of 400,000 or fewer cubic feet per floor (such as homes, clinic waiting rooms, airplanes, etc.):** A close contact is defined as sharing the same indoor airspace for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period (for example, three individual 5-minute exposures for a total of 15 minutes) during a confirmed case's infectious period.
- **In large indoor spaces greater than 400,000 cubic feet per floor (such as open-floor-plan offices, warehouses, large retail stores, manufacturing, or food processing facilities):** A close contact is defined as being within 6 feet of the infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period during the confirmed case's infectious period.

Spaces that are separated by floor-to-ceiling walls (e.g., offices, suites, rooms, waiting areas, bathrooms, or break or eating areas that are separated by floor-to-ceiling walls) must be considered distinct indoor airspaces.

Infectious period: The potential infectious period is 2 days before the date symptoms began or the first positive test date (if no symptoms) through Day 10. Day 0 is the symptom onset date or first positive test date.

Isolation period: The term "Isolation Period" refers to the following:

- **Individuals with COVID-19 with symptoms:** Individuals who have COVID-19 and are experiencing symptoms shall stay home away from others until fever free for 24 hours without using fever-reducing medication AND other symptoms are mild and improving. Masks are required to leave isolation before 10 days from when symptoms began or the date of their first positive test, when around other people. You can remove your mask sooner if you have two sequential negative tests at least one day apart.
- **Individuals with COVID-19 without symptoms:** Individuals who have COVID-19 and are not experiencing symptoms are not required to isolate provided they wear a well-fitting, high-quality respiratory mask whenever around other people. You can remove your mask sooner if you have two sequential negative tests at least one day apart.





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Summary of Ongoing Public Health Recommendations:

All people with symptoms of a POSSIBLE respiratory infection:

- Should stay home and away from others and test for COVID-19, regardless of vaccination status or previous infection. Those at high risk for severe illness from other respiratory viruses should consult with their healthcare provider about getting tested for flu and/or RSV. See LAC DPH COVID-19 guidance: [Learn about Symptoms and What to do If you are Sick](#).

People with COVID-19 Who HAVE Symptoms:

- Stay home and isolate from others while having symptoms and/or fever, as instructed below. If around others at home and in public, wear a well-fitting, high-quality respiratory mask.
- May leave isolation if fever-free for 24 hours without taking medicine that lowers fevers, such as medicine that contain acetaminophen, ibuprofen, or naproxen, AND either have no symptoms or symptoms are mild and improving. **LAC DPH strongly recommends that persons test negative prior to leaving isolation.** If leaving isolation before day 10, wear a well-fitting, high-quality respiratory mask around others for 10 days after symptoms began or the date of initial positive test.

People with COVID-19 Who DO NOT HAVE Symptoms:

- Are not required to isolate only if wearing a well-fitting, high-quality mask in all settings when around others, for 10 days after first testing positive.

Remember, persons with COVID-19, whether or not they have symptoms, may transmit the virus to others for up to 10 days.

Instructions for Confirmed COVID-19 Cases

To avoid the spread of infection, everyone with a COVID-19 infection needs to adhere to these instructions regardless of their vaccination status, history of previous infection, or lack of symptoms.

To count the days:

- For people with symptoms, Day 0 is the first day of symptoms.
- For people with a positive COVID test who never develop symptoms, Day 0 is the day the first positive test was collected. Note, if symptoms start, the new Day 0 is the first day of symptoms.

1. Isolate (Stay Home)

Stay home and away from others if symptomatic and/or with fever. While in isolation, follow the full isolation instructions to prevent spread to others. For additional information and frequently asked questions, visit ph.lacounty.gov/covidcommunity.





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Those with symptoms who are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19, should speak with a healthcare provider as soon as they test positive to determine eligibility for [COVID-19 treatments](#) that work best if taken within 5-7 days from when symptoms start.

Ending isolation:

- A person may end isolation if both of the following criteria are met*:
 - Have not had a fever for 24 hours without taking medication that reduces fevers **AND**
 - Other [symptoms](#) are not present or are mild and improving.

*It is strongly recommended that an individual test for COVID-19 prior to ending isolation and extend isolation until day 10 if they continue to test positive. Remaining in isolation can reduce the chance of unintentionally infecting another person with COVID.

- People who continue to have symptoms of COVID-19 that are not improving must continue to isolate until their symptoms are improving or until after Day 10.
- People who have left isolation and have their COVID-19 symptoms return or worsen, should re-test (with an antigen test). If they test positive, they need to re-start isolation at Day 0.

2. Wear a well-fitting, high-quality respiratory mask

- While in isolation, wear a well-fitting, high-quality respiratory mask if there is a need to be in the same room with others.
- Continue to wear a well-fitting, high-quality respiratory mask around others through Day 10.

Those with COVID-19 and no symptoms shall wear a mask for 10 days when around others. This will reduce the chance of unknowingly spreading the infection to others.

3. Tell close contacts

- Close contacts should be informed that they may be infected, so that they are aware and can take appropriate next steps to protect themselves and others within their community. They should follow the instructions for close contacts available at: ph.lacounty.gov/covidcommunity.

Instructions for Close Contacts

As long as a close contact does not have symptoms, they do not need to stay away from others. They should take steps to lower the risk of spreading COVID-19 to others.

To count the days: Day 0 is the day of last contact (exposure) with the infected person.





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Close contacts:

1. Wear a well-fitting, high-quality respiratory mask indoors around others through Day 10

- This is especially important when near those at higher risk for severe COVID-19 disease.

2. Test for COVID-19 within 3-5 days after last exposure

- Testing within 3-5 days after the last known exposure to COVID-19 is recommended for all close contacts. Close contacts with symptoms should test as soon as possible after exposure. Testing after a known exposure is particularly important for persons who live with or who are at [higher risk for severe illness](#). Early knowledge of infection status enables (a) earlier access to treatment options, if indicated (for those who may be at risk for severe illness), and (b) notification of close contacts who may also benefit by knowing if they are infected. If testing negative before Day 3, retest during the 3–5-day window following exposure, with at least 24 hours between the first and second test.
- Note: Close contacts who were previously infected with COVID-19 in the last 30 days or less, do not need to test unless symptoms develop. Close contacts who were previously infected with COVID-19 in the past 31-90 days should use an antigen test to lower the risk of false positives.
- If the test result is positive, stay home away from others and follow the isolation instructions above for a confirmed COVID-19 case.

3. Monitor health through Day 10

- If symptoms develop, stay home away from others and test right away.
- If the test result is positive, stay home away from others and follow the isolation instructions for a confirmed COVID-19 case.

For additional information and frequently asked questions, visit ph.lacounty.gov/covidcommunity.

