



What to do if you were potentially exposed to coronavirus disease (COVID-19)?



How people can be exposed to COVID-19

COVID-19 is spread mainly from person to person. Spread occurs more commonly between people who are in close contact (within about 6 feet for a total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period) with one another through respiratory droplets that come from the mouth or nose when an infected person coughs, sneezes, sings, or speaks. These droplets and particles can be breathed in by other people or land on their eyes, noses, or mouth. In some cases, they may contaminate surfaces they touch, but this is uncommon.

COVID-19 is spread in three main ways:

1. Breathing in air when close to an infected person exhaling small droplets and particles containing the virus.
2. Having small droplets and particles containing the virus land in the eyes, nose, or mouth, especially through splashes and sprays like a cough or sneeze.
3. Touching the eyes, nose, or mouth with hands that have the virus on them.

Sometimes spread can occur through [airborne transmission](#). This means an infected person releases small droplets and particles with the virus that could stay in the air for minutes to hours and infect people who are further than 6 feet away from them. Spread that occurs by breathing in air that contains the virus when you are not in close contact is uncommon but occurs more often in enclosed spaces with poor ventilation (airflow) and when you are exposed for a longer period of time. It is also uncommon for COVID-19 to spread through contact with contaminated surfaces. This means that you are unlikely to get COVID-19 by touching your eyes, nose, or mouth after touching a contaminated item.

COVID-19 can spread from people to animals in some situations, but this is uncommon. [Pet cats and dogs](#) can also sometimes become infected after close contact with people with COVID-19. Additionally, cases of reinfection with COVID-19 remain rare.

COVID-19 can be spread by people who are not showing symptoms or before their symptoms begin. Limit your exposure and stay safe when you go out. This is especially important if you are not yet fully vaccinated or if you have a weakened immune system.

- Fully vaccinated means 2 weeks or more have passed since getting the second dose of a two-dose vaccine (e.g., Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccine), or 2 weeks or more have passed since getting 1 dose of a single-dose vaccine (Johnson & Johnson/Janssen). This also applies to COVID-19 vaccines that have been authorized for emergency use by the [World Health Organization](#) (e.g., AstraZeneca/Oxford).
- If you have a condition or are taking medications that weaken your immune system, you may **not** be fully protected even if you are fully vaccinated. You should continue taking all [precautions](#) until your healthcare provider says you no longer need to do so.
 - Family and friends of people with weakened immune systems should get vaccinated to help protect these people.



Close contact with someone with COVID-19

You are more likely to get COVID-19 if you are in close contact with a person who has COVID-19 while they are contagious or still able to spread illness to others.

Close contact means:

- Being within 6 feet of a person who has COVID-19 for a total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period, or
- Having direct exposure to respiratory secretions (e.g., being coughed or sneezed on, sharing a drinking glass or utensils, kissing), or
- Caring for a person who has COVID-19, or
- Living with a person who has COVID-19.

Exception: In indoor K-12 settings, a student who is within 3 to 6 feet of an infected student is not considered a close contact as long as both students are wearing masks and the school has other prevention strategies in place.

People with COVID-19 can pass the COVID-19 virus to their close contacts starting from 2 days before they become sick (or 2 days before they test positive if they never had symptoms) until it is safe to be around other people (stop isolation).

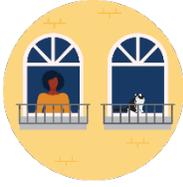
People who have had close contact with someone who has COVID-19 need to stay home and away from others. This is called quarantine.

- There are some exceptions where people are not required to quarantine (stay home) noted below.



Steps to take if you had close contact with someone with COVID-19

- **Stay home and away from others (“quarantine”)** unless you are not required to. Avoid contact with others to avoid spreading COVID-19.
 - Do not go to work, school, or public areas. Do not take public transportation, taxis, or ride-shares.
 - If you live with someone with COVID-19, stay separate from sick members in the household as much as possible. Avoid sharing the same space within the home, including being in the same room. Use a different bedroom or bathroom if that is possible.
 - Your local health department can help you make sure that your basic needs (for example, food and medication) are being met.
- **Monitor your health for 10 days after your last contact.**
 - Take your temperature with a thermometer two times a day (once in the morning, once at night) and watch for fever. Also, watch for other signs and symptoms of COVID-19, such as cough, shortness of breath, chills, muscle pain, sore throat, or new loss of taste or smell.
- **Get tested.** Contact your healthcare provider or public health to ask about getting tested. There are many COVID-19 test sites in Montana.
 - Get tested in 5 to 7 days after your exposure even if your first test was negative.
 - If you develop symptoms, you should get tested immediately, even if you already had a negative test.
 - Even if you do not have symptoms and your COVID-19 test is negative, you will still need to monitor your symptoms for the full 10 days and stay home for at least 10 days.
 - If you have tested positive for COVID-19 within the past 3 months and recovered, you do not have to get tested again (even after close contact with someone with COVID-19) as long as you do not develop new symptoms.
 - If you are fully vaccinated for COVID-19, you do not have to get tested (even after close contact with someone with COVID-19) as long as you do not develop symptoms and don't live or work in a healthcare facility, a correctional and detention facility, or a homeless shelter. If you live or work in one of these places, you may still need to get tested after an exposure even if you are fully vaccinated but do not need to quarantine.
- **Answer the call.** Your local health department will reach out to you with more recommendations if you or your child are identified as a close contact during contact tracing.
 - If you know you were a close contact to someone with COVID-19, stay home and monitor your health.



How long to stay home (quarantine) after you have close contact with someone with COVID-19

It can take up to 10 days after an exposure for you to develop COVID-19. This is why the public health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) warn people to stay home (quarantine) for 10 days after their last contact. **It is safest to stay home for 10 days.**

If you live with someone with COVID-19, you should stay home (quarantine) for 10 days after the last sick member of your household can end isolation and safely be around others again. If household members are able to be completely separate from the sick person, then they should stay home for 10 days after their last contact with the person. Complete separation means having no contact, spending no time together in shared spaces, staying in a separate bedroom, and using a separate bathroom.

If you are not able to stay home for 10 days after your last exposure and you do not have symptoms, you have 2 options*:

- Counting your date of last exposure as Day 0, you may leave home after Day 10; **or**
- If PCR or antigen testing is available, you can get tested on or after Day 5. You may leave home after Day 7 if the PCR or antigen test performed on or after Day 5 is negative.

It is **very important** to continue monitoring for symptoms and follow all recommendations (e.g., wear a mask, stay at least 6 feet away from others, avoid crowds and spaces with poor airflow, and wash hands often) for the full 14 days after the last exposure.

Who is not required to stay home (quarantine) after having close contact with someone with COVID-19

- People who have had COVID-19 in the past 3 months as long as they do not develop new symptoms.
- People who have been fully vaccinated for COVID-19 as long as they do not have symptoms
 - **Fully vaccinated people who live or work in correctional and detention facilities or homeless shelters** should still get tested after close contact exposure, but do not need to quarantine (stay home).
 - Incarcerated/detained persons who are fully vaccinated and do not have COVID-19 symptoms do not need to be separated from others (quarantine) at intake, after transfer, or following exposure to suspected or confirmed COVID-19.
- **Healthcare personnel (HCP)** who are fully vaccinated for COVID-19 do not need to stay home (quarantine) after a workplace or community-associated exposure or be restricted from work as long as they do not have any symptoms and do not have any conditions that weaken the immune system (e.g., organ transplantation, cancer treatment). HCP should continue to follow all travel recommendations.

*It is **very important** that people who are not fully vaccinated, but who are not required to stay home (quarantine) because they have had COVID-19 in the past 3 months, monitor their health for 10 days after their last exposure and continue following all recommendations (e.g., wear a mask, stay at least 6 feet away from others, avoid crowds and poorly ventilated areas, and wash hands often).

Fully vaccinated inpatients and residents of healthcare facilities should continue to follow quarantine recommendations after close contact with someone with COVID-19. Healthcare settings include hospitals and long-term care facilities (e.g., nursing homes, assisted living facilities).

People with **weakened immune systems (immunocompromised)** who have been fully vaccinated should talk with their healthcare provider about whether staying home (quarantining) after close contact exposure is recommended.

These recommendations are based on what we know about COVID-19 vaccines and protection provided by previous infection at this time and apply to COVID-19 vaccines that have been authorized for emergency use by FDA (such as Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson Janssen) and the World Health Organization (WHO) (such as AstraZeneca/Oxford). CDC and other scientists continue to research the ability of COVID-19 vaccines to prevent the spread of the virus, but this process takes time. As we learn more, changes could be made to these recommendations.



If you start to feel sick or test positive for COVID-19, isolate yourself at home even if you are fully vaccinated.

- Stay home except to get medical care. Wear a mask before going to any medical appointments.
- Separate yourself from other people, including people who live with you, as much as you can. Do not go to work, school, or public areas. Avoid using public transportation, such as buses, trains, ridesharing, or taxis.
- The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, cough, and shortness of breath. Other common symptoms include, but are not limited to: chills, muscle pain, sore throat, or new loss of taste or smell. Not everyone with COVID-19 will have all symptoms and fever might not be present. Some people with COVID-19 might not have any symptoms.
- If you develop symptoms, public health recommends that you get tested. Please reach out to your healthcare provider. Your provider may collect samples to test you or help you to find testing sites in your area.