What to do if you were potentially exposed to someone with confirmed coronavirus disease (COVID-19)

If you think you have been exposed to someone with COVID-19, follow the steps below to monitor your health and to avoid spreading the disease to others.

What is coronavirus disease 2019 (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. Most people with COVID-19 will have mild disease but some people will get sicker and may need to be hospitalized.

How do I know if I was exposed?

You generally need to be in close contact with a person with COVID-19 to get infected. Close contact includes:

- Living in the same household as a person with COVID-19
- Caring for a person with COVID-19
- Being within 6 feet of a person with COVID-19 for more than a few minutes, OR
- Being in direct contact with secretions from a person with COVID-19 (e.g., being coughed on, kissing, sharing utensils, etc.).
- Being in close contact (as described above) in the 48 hours before a person with COVID-19 developed symptoms.

If you have not been in close contact with a person who you know had COVID-19, you are considered to be at low, but not zero risk for infection. Cases of COVID-19 do occur due to community spread from people you may not know have COVID-19. That is why hand hygiene and social distancing are important prevention measures.

If you have been exposed to a person with COVID-19 but not in close contact, you can continue to go to work and school but should monitor your health for 14 days and stay away from others if you get sick.

What should I do if I am a close contact to someone with COVID-19 while they were ill but I am not sick?

You should monitor your health for any symptoms of COVID-19 including fever, cough, new loss of sense of smell or taste, headache, muscle pain, sore throat, or shortness of breath for 14 days after the last day you were in close contact with the sick person with COVID-19. You should not go to work or school, and should avoid public places for 14 days (unless you are a health care worker or work in critical infrastructure—see below). You may be contacted for a public health interview.

If you live with someone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19, please see additional guidance for how to care safely for ill persons: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/care-for-someone.html

What should I do if I had close contact with someone with COVID-19 but I am not sick and I work in critical infrastructure?

Critical infrastructure includes: state and local law enforcement; 911 call center employees; Fusion Center employees; hazardous material responders; janitorial and other custodial staff; and workers in food and agriculture, critical manufacturing, informational technology, transportation, energy and government facilities.

Critical infrastructure workers who had close contact with a COVID-19 case can continue to work as long as they remain well without symptoms and if they take the following measures:

- **Pre-screen**: Have temperature and symptom check daily before starting work
- **Wear a cloth face covering**: Use at all times at work
- **Social distance**: As much as possible, remain at least 6 feet away from coworkers
• **Disinfect and clean work spaces**: Increase frequency of cleaning surfaces and items that are touched or handled often
• **Don’t share** headsets, phones, food or drinks

Follow these measures for 14 days after you were last in close contact with a person with COVID-19. Notify your employer and go home immediately if you become sick. For additional information see: [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/critical-workers/implementing-safety-practices.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/critical-workers/implementing-safety-practices.html)

**What should I do if I had close contact with someone with COVID-19 but I am not sick and I am a health care worker?**

If possible, you should stay home for 14-days after you were last exposed to this person and monitor for symptoms. If not feasible due to staffing needs and if you are asymptomatic, you can return to work. However, you should monitor your temperature and for signs of respiratory illness before starting work and for every 4 hours during your shift. Wear a mask while performing clinical duties for 14-days after your exposure and do not provide patient care to severely immunocompromised patients (e.g., transplant, hematology-oncology).

If you are affiliated with a facility, employee health services will help you to assess your risk and make appropriate recommendations. For additional information, see: [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/healthcare-facilities/hcp-return-work.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/healthcare-facilities/hcp-return-work.html)

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

Currently, anyone with COVID-19 symptoms is encouraged to be tested. COVID-19 testing sites can be found on the IDPH website at [http://dph.illinois.gov/testing](http://dph.illinois.gov/testing).

If you are over the age of 60 years, are pregnant, or have medical conditions, you may be at higher risk of COVID-19 complications. Contact your physician’s office and tell them that you were exposed to someone with COVID-19. They may want to monitor your health more closely.

If you do not have a higher risk condition but want medical advice, call your healthcare provider and tell them that you were exposed to someone with COVID-19. Your healthcare provider can help you decide if you need to be evaluated. Testing is recommended for persons with symptoms of COVID-19.

You can also contact a free [remote health monitoring program](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/healthcare-facilities/hcp-return-work.html) for additional guidance.

**Stay home to protect others from getting sick**

If you get sick with fever, cough or shortness of breath or [other symptoms that are consistent with COVID-19](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/symptoms.html) (even if your symptoms are very mild), you should stay at home and away from other people for a minimum of 10 days and until your symptoms are resolving and you have had no fever (without taking fever-reducing medication) for at least 72 hours.

**If you need immediate medical attention**

If you experience any of the following warning signs, seek immediate medical care:

- Trouble breathing
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- New confusion
- Inability to wake or stay awake
- Bluish lips or face

If you have a medical emergency and need to call 911, notify the dispatch personnel that you may have been exposed to COVID-19. If possible, put on a facemask before emergency medical services arrive or immediately after they arrive.