Updated Community Guidance for COVID-19 Isolation and Quarantine

The following reflects an alignment with the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) community guidance for isolation and quarantine from April 6, 2022.

Guidance continues to be updated based on the most recent data on SARS-CoV-2 transmission. At this time, current Omicron variants are averaging a shorter incubation (i.e., it may still take up to 10 days for an infection to develop after exposure, but these variants average 2–3 days). This underscores the importance of prompt testing after exposure and may also make quarantine after exposure less universally useful at this time. Isolation of contagious persons remains essential, and persons should assess their household risk(s) for additional post-exposure considerations.

Note: Community guidance serves to inform actions for most persons in their homes and communities. Cal/OSHA has additional masking and testing requirements for employees in the workplace. This also does not apply to persons who live or work in high-risk settings—see setting-specific guidance on isolation and quarantine for health care, long-term care, shelters, and corrections.

Stay home if you test positive for COVID-19 or have symptoms of COVID-19

If you have symptoms, stay home and get tested right away. Isolation is indicated for anyone who tests positive, regardless of vaccination status, prior COVID-19 infection, or having no symptoms. Home rapid tests are very reliable but sometimes can miss early infections; if you have symptoms and test negative on a home test, repeat the test 1–2 days later, or get a lab PCR test at a clinic.

Stay home (away from others) for at least 5 full days. This is when most people are the most contagious; isolation can end, and you can return to normal activities as soon as day 6 if you:

✓ Have a negative rapid test on/after day 5 and;
✓ Have no fever, and other symptoms have improved and;
✓ You continue to wear a well-fitted mask around others for 5 more days (to complete 10 days), especially when indoors around others.

Isolation should not be discontinued before 10 days until you meet all criteria. Continue isolation until you do meet all the criteria or until 10 days pass; a test is not needed after day 10. Not everyone is able to finish isolation before 10 days, as some people need longer to recover than others.

How to count isolation days: The virus can be contagious up to 10 full days from when symptoms start. The day symptoms start is day 0. If you never have symptoms, start counting isolation time from the test date instead as day 0; people who have no symptoms are still contagious.

Take precautions if you are exposed to COVID-19
If you are not in a high-risk household, it may be reasonable to forgo home quarantine if you have no symptoms and follow the actions below:

- Test 3–5 days after the exposure (everyone—even if no symptoms or if vaccinated)
- Wear a well-fitted mask around others indoors for 10 days. This is especially important if:
  - The exposure was a close contact (e.g., someone in your home or an intimate partner) or;
  - You are near persons who are at higher risk or vulnerable persons (e.g., persons with health problems, elderly, pregnant, young children, and babies) or;
  - You have not had the vaccine or have a weakened immune system so are more likely to get infected after an exposure.
- Continue to watch for symptoms for 10 days; stay home and get retested if they develop.

*How to count days after exposure: Day 0 is the last day of exposure to the person with COVID-19. Note: Quarantine is still in place for high-risk settings like group homes, long-term care, shelters, detentions, or health care. Employers may have additional masking requirements or work restrictions after exposure per Cal/OSHA.*

**Extra considerations if you live in a high-risk household**

In high-risk households, extra precautions are recommended if someone in the home has COVID-19 or was exposed to COVID-19. High-risk households have at least one person in the home who is at high risk, which means they are:

- More likely to get COVID-19 infection if they are exposed
  - weakened immune system (even if they had the vaccine, the body is not able to build a strong protection) or
  - unable to be vaccinated (i.e., babies and children under age 5) or not vaccinated
- More likely to get severely sick or die from COVID-19 infection, such as
  - Over age 65
  - Persons who are pregnant or were recently pregnant
  - Persons with certain medical conditions, including diabetes, high blood pressure, overweight/obese, weakened immune system, heart problems, lung problems, kidney problems, cancer, disabilities, or others

After exposure, extra precautions can better protect the high-risk person(s). This may include: 10-day quarantine away from others in the home; wearing masks in the home in common areas; testing more frequently; and/or avoiding close contact with high-risk persons after an exposure, as much as possible.

Other recommendations to protect high-risk households and persons:

- Make sure all eligible persons in high-risk households stay up to date with their vaccines, including boosters.
- High-risk persons and their households should consider wearing masks indoors in public, particularly when there are higher community rates of COVID-19. Well-fitted surgical masks or higher-level respirators such as KN95 or N95 provide the best protection—even when others around you are not wearing a mask.
- High-risk persons should also talk with their providers to have a plan in place if they get sick with COVID-19: [Early treatment](#) as soon as symptoms start is available and advised for high-risk persons to prevent severe illness.