



Options to Shorten Quarantine for COVID-19

[Quarantine](#) is used to keep someone who *was exposed* to COVID-19 away from others. It helps prevent the spread of disease that can occur before someone knows they are sick or if they are infected with the virus without feeling symptoms.

On average, it takes a person about five days after coming in contact with the COVID-19 virus to develop symptoms, but it can take as long as 14 days. People can spread the virus even before symptoms develop and some may not show signs. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and DHEC have previously recommended a strict 14-day period of quarantine for persons who had close contact to a confirmed COVID-19 case. However, the CDC has recently offered [options](#) to shorten the quarantine period to less than 14 days. Only a small number of people will be able to spread the virus to others more than 10 days after they have come in contact with the virus, and proper testing of these people can also shorten the time needed to quarantine. Offering options to shorten quarantine can help encourage people to provide names of those they have been in contact with and help ensure quarantine recommendations are being followed when contacts are more likely to be able to spread the virus. Since not all cases can be prevented when the quarantine period is shortened, it is not always the best action to take. For example, those who work with or care for people at high risk of very bad infection should consider completing a full 14-day quarantine.

The CDC recommends the following alternative options to a 14-day quarantine:

1. Quarantine can end after **Day 10** without testing and if no [symptoms](#) were reported during daily symptom monitoring.
2. Quarantine can end after **Day 7** if a viral test is negative **AND** if no [symptoms](#) were reported during daily symptom monitoring.
 - a. The viral test must be collected no sooner than Day 5 to be used to shorten quarantine, but quarantine cannot be discontinued earlier than completion of Day 7.
 - b. Viral tests include those collected by a swab of the nose or throat (PCR or antigen tests). Blood tests for antibodies may not be used to shorten quarantine.

These conditions must also be met to end quarantine early:

1. No [symptoms](#) of COVID-19 occurred during quarantine
AND
2. Continue to monitor for symptoms until Day 14 after last time coming into contact with the COVID-19 case;
AND
3. Continue to closely follow [all recommendations to prevent spread of the virus](#) (correct and regular use of face coverings, social distancing, hand washing, etc.) through

quarantine Day 14. Anyone who develops symptoms must immediately separate themselves from others, call their medical provider, and get tested for COVID-19.

For those who live in the same house as someone getting better after COVID-19 infection, the quarantine period begins when they are able to separate from the sick household member or when the sick person is told they are no longer able to spread the virus to others (generally when they complete their 10-day isolation period, during which they should avoid all contact with others).

- For household members who can separate from the household member with COVID-19, they should quarantine for 14 days from their last contact with that individual or apply the 7-day or 10-day criteria to shorten the quarantine based on their date of last contact.
- For household members who are not able to separate from the household member with COVID-19 because they are caring for them or do not have a separate room they can use, they should quarantine for 14 days after that person is no longer in isolation or apply the 7-day or 10-day criteria to shorten the quarantine period based on the day when the COVID-19 case is no longer in isolation.

Some people may wish to get tested as soon as they learn that they were a contact to someone with COVID-19. This may be helpful especially if you could have been around other people with the virus around the same time as the person who you know has COVID-19. It is important to know that any testing done before Day 5 of the quarantine does not shorten the time needed to quarantine and additional testing will need to be done at Day 5 or later.

Anyone who tests positive for the virus at any point, will need to complete the isolation requirements for those determined to have COVID-19. They must separate from others for 10 days after their symptoms started or after they were tested if they had no symptoms. After 10 days, they may resume normal activities as long as their overall symptoms have improved and they have had no fever in the past 24 hours without taking medicine to reduce fever. Some people who do not have a healthy immune system or are very sick may be recommended by their doctor to separate from others longer. Your doctor can determine if that is appropriate.