



## BHS Medical Department

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# Quarantine vs. Isolation

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You may be confused about the various terms between quarantine and isolation during the COVID-19 and wonder what you should be doing and why it matters.

Quarantine and isolation are applied to two different scenarios.

**Quarantine** is separating people who have or may have been exposed to COVID-19 or who've recently had close contact with someone with the disease, to see if they become ill.

Going into quarantine means staying at a specific facility or staying at home and away from others for 14 days **still remains the gold standard** to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the absence of symptoms or before their onset.

People who don't develop symptoms after the quarantine period ends are released.

However, to make it easier and to lessen stress on you, two shorter alternatives to quarantine are possible, and your doctor will decide for that shorter quarantine period:

- 10-day quarantine is sufficient if the person in quarantine experiences no symptoms during that time.
- Quarantine can end after 7 days if the person test negative for COVID-19 and has no symptoms.

There is a small risk that a person who is leaving quarantine early can transmit the virus to someone else if they become infectious. That person still needs to look out for symptoms for a full 14 days after exposure to the virus. We recommend that you monitor yourself:

- Continue to watch for symptoms for 14 days.
- Watch for common signs and symptoms, such as fever, cough or shortness of breath.
- Keep distance (2 meters) between yourself and others.
- Stay away from other people as much as possible, especially people at high risk of serious illness.
- Wear a mask if contact with other people can't be avoided.
- Isolate yourself at home if you feel ill.
- Call your doctor if symptoms worsen.

**Isolation** is separating people who are ill from others who are not ill to keep the disease from spreading.

People who have tested positive for COVID-19, with or without symptoms, should isolate themselves for at least 10 days after the onset of symptoms.

If you experience a symptom, such as fever or fatigue, but do not get tested to confirm a coronavirus infection, you still have to stay away from others for 10 days just to be safe.

Most people are free of the virus and are no longer contagious 10 days after symptoms develop.

Just because you are no longer contagious doesn't mean you will be completely without symptoms.

Symptoms may persist long after infection.

Studies show that recovery time for COVID-19 can last longer than the virus.

Many of symptomatic adults who test positive for COVID-19 but who are not hospitalized, might not return to their usual state of health 14 to 21 days after testing positive.

The key to coming off isolation is to make sure your symptoms are improving. If they do not improve, touch base with your doctor. Warning signs that require immediate medical attention include trouble breathing, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion, inability to wake or stay awake, and bluish lips or face.

Your doctor might end isolation after that 10-day period as long as symptoms are improving and the person has been fever free for at least 24 hours.

For people who have tested positive for COVID-19, your doctor will decide if you no longer need a follow-up test that comes back negative in order to be around other people again.

Most of all persistent positive tests are likely a result of "leftover virus fragments," and not an indication that the virus was still present and transmissible. So your doctor will decide if there's no point in doing all these follow-up tests anymore, because they just provide potentially confusing results.

During home isolation, you'll need to:

- Stay away from family members.
- Wear a mask.
- Avoid sharing dishes, glasses, bedding and other household items.
- Use a separate bedroom and bathroom if possible.
- If your symptoms get worse, contact your doctor for medical advice.
- Follow recommendations from your doctor about when you can end isolation.

**Exceptions to the 10-day isolation rule.** People who have weakened immune systems may need to stay home and away from others for more than 10 days, but they should talk to their doctor for guidance.

Remember to wear your mask, to practice **social distancing** often called physical distancing, by keeping space at least 2 meters away from others outside your home and avoiding large groups.

Quarantine, isolation and social distancing share the same purpose - keeping the virus from spreading to others.

*Ref: Mayo Clinic*

*Ref: AARP.org*