

# Isolation and Precautions for People with COVID-19

Updated May 11, 2023

[If you were exposed](#) to COVID-19, you should start taking precautions.

Isolation and Exposure Calculator

A tool to help you determine if you need to isolate or take other steps to prevent spreading COVID-19.

## Isolation & Exposure

If you have COVID-19, you can spread the virus to others. There are precautions you can take to prevent spreading it to others: isolation, masking, and avoiding contact with [people who are at high risk of getting very sick](#). Isolation is used to separate people with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 from those without COVID-19.

These recommendations do not change based on [COVID-19 hospital admission levels](#). If you have COVID-19, also see additional information on [treatments](#) that may be available to you.

This information is intended for a general audience. Healthcare professionals should see [Ending Isolation and Precautions for People with COVID-19](#). This CDC guidance is meant to supplement—not replace—any federal, state, local, territorial, or tribal health and safety laws, rules, and regulations.

**For Healthcare Professionals:** [Ending Isolation and Precautions for People with COVID-19](#)

When to Isolate

Regardless of vaccination status, **you should isolate from others when you have COVID-19.**

You should also isolate **if you are sick and suspect that you have COVID-19 but do not yet have [test results](#)**. If your results are positive, follow the full isolation recommendations below. If your results are negative, you can end your isolation.

## IF YOU TEST

Negative

You can end your isolation

## IF YOU TEST

Positive

Follow the full isolation recommendations below

When you have COVID-19, isolation is counted in days, as follows:

## If you had no symptoms

- **Day 0 is the day you were tested** (not the day you received your positive test result)
- **Day 1 is the first full day** following the day you were tested
- If you develop [symptoms](#) within 10 days of when you were tested, the **clock restarts at day 0 on the day of symptom onset**

## If you had symptoms

- **Day 0 of isolation is the day of symptom onset**, regardless of when you tested positive
- **Day 1 is the first full day** after the day your [symptoms](#) started

### Isolation

If you test positive for COVID-19, **stay home for at least 5 days and isolate from others in your home.**

You are **likely most infectious during these first 5 days.**

- **Wear a high-quality mask** if you must be around others at home and in public.
- Do not go places where you are unable to wear a mask. For travel guidance, see CDC's [Travel webpage](#).
- [Do not travel](#).
- Stay home and separate from others as much as possible.
- Use a separate bathroom, if possible.
- Take steps to [improve ventilation](#) at home, if possible.
- Don't share personal household items, like cups, towels, and utensils.
- Monitor your [symptoms](#). If you have an [emergency warning sign](#) (like trouble breathing), seek emergency medical care immediately.
- Learn more about [what to do if you have COVID-19](#).

### Ending Isolation

**End isolation based on how serious your COVID-19 symptoms were.** Loss of taste and smell may persist for weeks or months after recovery and need not delay the end of isolation.

## If you had no symptoms

You may end isolation after day 5.

## If you had symptoms and:

Your symptoms are improving

You **may end isolation after day 5** if:

- You are fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medication).

Your symptoms are not improving

**Continue to isolate** until:

- You are fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medication).
- Your symptoms are improving. <sup>1</sup>

If you had symptoms and had:

Moderate illness (you experienced shortness of breath or had difficulty breathing)

You need to **isolate through day 10**.

Severe illness (you were hospitalized) or have a weakened immune system

- You need to **isolate through day 10**.
- **Consult your doctor** before ending isolation.
- Ending isolation without a viral test may not be an option for you.

If you are unsure if your symptoms are moderate or severe or if you have a weakened immune system, talk to a healthcare provider for further guidance.

Regardless of when you end isolation

Until at least day 11:

- Avoid being around people who are more likely to get very sick from COVID-19.
- Remember to wear a high-quality mask when indoors around others at home and in public.
- Do not go places where you are unable to wear a mask until you are able to discontinue masking (see below).
- For travel guidance, see CDC's [Travel webpage](#).

Removing Your Mask

**After you have ended isolation, when you are feeling better** (no fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and symptoms improving),

- Wear your mask through day 10.

**OR**

- If you have access to antigen tests, you should consider using them. With two sequential negative tests 48 hours apart, you may remove your mask sooner than day 10.

Note: If your antigen test results<sup>(1)</sup> are positive, you may still be infectious. You should continue wearing a mask and wait at least 48 hours before taking another test. Continue taking antigen tests at least 48 hours apart until you have two sequential negative results. This may mean you need to continue wearing a mask and testing beyond day 10.

**After you have ended isolation, if your COVID-19 symptoms recur or worsen, restart your isolation at day 0.** Talk to a healthcare provider if you have questions about your symptoms or when to end isolation.

<sup>(1)</sup> As noted in the Food and Drug Administration labeling for authorized over-the-counter antigen tests, negative test results do not rule out SARS-CoV-2 infection and should not be used as the sole basis for treatment or patient management decisions, including infection control decisions.

Last Updated May 11, 2023

Source: [National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases \(NCIRD\), Division of Viral Diseases](#)