

Learning About Contact Tracing for COVID-19



What is contact tracing?

Contact tracing is a process that public health authorities use to fight the spread of infectious diseases. These include COVID-19 (coronavirus), measles, and others.

A public health authority worker reaches out to a person who has tested positive for the disease. Then the worker calls other people who may have been exposed. Depending on the disease, the contact may have happened through close contact, by eating at the same place, or through sex. The contacts are told that they have been exposed. The worker can then guide the contacts on what to do next. This may include seeing a doctor, getting tested, or staying quarantined at home for a while.

Information about the person and their contacts is kept private. It's used only to help stop the spread of the disease. If you have any concerns about privacy, talk to the public health authority worker.

Why is it done?

Contact tracing helps reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 among your friends, family, and community.

A person who tests positive for COVID-19 can expose other people to the virus. Each of these people in turn can expose more people in an ever-widening circle. This raises the risk of more people getting sick. But a call from the public health authority can help both the person and their contacts take action so they

don't spread the virus to others. Then the risk of illness and death in the community goes down.

How is it done?

Contact tracing for COVID-19 usually starts with a phone call. A public health authority worker calls you to say that you've tested positive for COVID-19 or that you've been in close contact with someone who has.

If you test positive for COVID-19

The caller will ask what symptoms, if any, you have. You may be asked about any health conditions that may put you at higher risk for serious illness. You'll be urged to stay home and self-isolate. How long you'll need to stay home depends on whether you have symptoms. If you don't have symptoms, it may be about 10 days from the date of your test result. If you have symptoms, ask the caller how long you'll have to self-isolate.

The caller will ask where you've been recently. They'll ask for the names and phone numbers of anyone you've had close contact with. These people will also be contacted. And the caller will contact any businesses or event venues you visited. Your name will not be given out unless you say it's okay.

If your contacts get early warning that they may have COVID-19, they can self-isolate sooner. They may be less likely to pass COVID-19 to their own friends and family.

If you are a close contact

If you were in close contact with someone who has COVID-19, the caller will urge you to stay home and self-quarantine for 14 days starting on the date of the contact.

The caller will give you information about COVID-19 and urge you to watch for any symptoms. How long you stay home may change if you have symptoms. Follow the caller's instructions. You may be asked about other people you've come in contact with.