

January 26, 2021

Isolation Guidance: What to do if you are sick with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19)

If you have tested positive for COVID-19 infection, have symptoms compatible with COVID-19 or if a healthcare provider or public health official has told you that COVID-19 infection is suspected because you have been exposed to a person with COVID-19, you must follow the home isolation instructions below. These steps will help prevent the disease from spreading to others in your household and community. You should also follow these instructions if you suspect that you have COVID-19, even if you do not have a known exposure. The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, cough, and/or shortness of breath.

If you have tested positive for COVID-19 infection, you may be contacted by the Department of Public Health to collect information about your close contacts. Regardless of whether you are contacted or not, please notify your close contacts of your illness and inform them they may be contacted by the Department of Public Health. More information for your close contacts can be found here: <https://dph.georgia.gov/contact>.

Isolation Instructions:

Stay home except to get medical care

You must not go outside your home unless you need medical care or in the event of an emergency, such as a fire. Do not go to work, school, or public areas, and do not use public transportation, Uber/Lyft, or taxis. If seeking medical care, always call ahead to alert the healthcare provider that you have or may have COVID-19.

Separate yourself from other people and animals in your home

As much as possible, you should stay in a different room from other people in your home. You should use a separate bathroom, if available. The CDC currently recommends keeping 6 feet between yourself and others, if possible. Prohibit visitors to your home as much as possible.

Wear a face mask

You should wear a face mask (this can be a cloth mask) when you are around other people (e.g., sharing a room or vehicle), pets, and before you enter a healthcare provider's office. If you are not able to wear a face mask (for example, because it causes trouble breathing), then people who live with you should not stay in the same room with you, or they should wear a face mask if they enter your room.

Appropriate hygiene

Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If handwashing with soap is not possible, use alcohol-based sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol to thoroughly cover all surfaces of your hands, then rub until they feel dry. Avoid touching your mouth, eyes, or nose with unwashed hands. If you cough or sneeze, do so into your elbow or use a tissue to cover your mouth.

Avoid sharing household items

You should not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, bedding, or other items with other people in your home. After using these items, you should wash them thoroughly with soap and water.

Clean “high-touch” surfaces frequently

Use a household cleaning spray or wipe, according to the label instructions. Labels contain instructions for safe and effective use of the cleaning product including precautions you should take when applying the product, such as wearing gloves and making sure you have good ventilation during use of the product.

Monitor your symptoms

If you develop worsening symptoms (i.e., difficulty breathing) you should seek prompt medical attention. Be sure to call your healthcare provider before seeking care and tell them that you have been diagnosed with COVID-19. Wear a facemask before entering the healthcare facility to protect other patients and staff from being exposed.

If you have a medical emergency, call 911. Notify emergency services that you have COVID-19 infection. Put on a facemask if possible before emergency services arrive.

Discontinuing home isolation if you had symptoms:

- At least 10 days* have passed since *symptoms first appeared* and
- At least 24 hours have passed since last fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and
- Symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath) have improved

Discontinuing home isolation if you did NOT have symptoms:

- At least 10 days* have passed since the positive laboratory test and the person remains asymptomatic
- Note, if you later develop symptoms, you should follow the guidance for symptomatic persons above.

**A limited number of persons with severe illness (you were admitted to a hospital and needed oxygen) or persons with a weakened immune system (immunocompromised) due to a health condition or medication may produce replication-competent virus beyond 10 days, that may warrant extending duration of isolation for up to 20 days after symptom onset. Consider consultation with your medical provider and infection control experts.*

Note: You do not need to isolate if you test positive within three months of a positive test you have already completed isolation for (unless you develop new symptoms). If you have developed new symptoms following a prior isolation and have tested positive again, you should complete isolation again. Additionally, if you have a new positive test 3 months after your prior infection, you will need to isolate and identify all close contacts for quarantine.

COVID-19 Vaccination and Isolation

If you or your close contacts have question about the COVID-19 vaccine, please visit <https://dph.georgia.gov/covid-vaccine> or call our COVID-19 vaccination hotline at (888) 357-0169.

Vaccinated persons should continue to follow all DPH guidance to protect themselves and others and should follow isolation guidance if positive for COVID-19, even if previously vaccinated.

Return to work:

- If you are Healthcare Personnel, please follow guidance from DPH here: <https://dph.georgia.gov/document/document/dph-return-work-guidance/download>
- If you do not work in a healthcare setting, please follow guidance from DPH here: <https://dph.georgia.gov/document/document/dph-covid-19-return-work-guidance-after-covid-19-illness-or-exposure-persons-not/download>

For ALL people

- When leaving the home, keep a distance of 6 feet from others and wear a cloth face covering when around other people. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>

CDC guidance: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/index.html>

Contact information for the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH): 1-866-PUB-HLTH (782-4584)