

UPDATE: Isolation and Quarantine Periods for COVID-19 for the General Population

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TO:	Health Alert Network
FROM:	Keara Klinepeter, Acting Secretary of Health
SUBJECT:	Isolation and Quarantine Periods for COVID-19 for the General Population
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This transmission is a “Health Update,” provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

HOSPITALS: PLEASE SHARE WITH ALL MEDICAL, PEDIATRIC, NURSING AND LABORATORY STAFF IN YOUR HOSPITAL; **EMS COUNCILS:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE; **FQHCs:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE **LOCAL HEALTH JURISDICTIONS:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE; **PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE TO YOUR MEMBERSHIP; **LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES:** PLEASE SHARE WITH ALL MEDICAL, INFECTION CONTROL, AND NURSING STAFF IN YOUR FACILITY

- This guidance replaces PA-HAN 607 and provides clarification on isolation and quarantine recommendations for persons exposed to SARS-CoV-2.
- Persons who test positive for COVID-19 must isolate for 5 days. If after 5 days, the patient is asymptomatic or has resolving symptoms, their isolation period is over; however, they should still wear a mask around others until day 10.
- Persons who have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 and have received a booster vaccine or are within 6 months of receiving their primary vaccine series should wear a **mask** around others for 10 days, but do not need to quarantine.
- Persons who are unvaccinated or who are eligible (i.e., more than 6 months after primary vaccine series) but have not yet received a booster vaccine must quarantine at home for 5 days, and then wear a **mask** around others until Day 10.
- All exposed persons regardless of vaccination should test on Day 5 if possible.
- Heterologous dosing (e.g., mix-and-match vaccine products) may occur for the booster dose.
- Isolation guidance for healthcare workers can be found in PA-HAN-614.
- **This guidance does NOT apply to non-healthcare congregate settings or to persons at higher risk for severe disease. Additional guidance is underway for these populations.**
- Additional HAN messages are currently being created or revised to reflect these changes.
- If you have questions about this guidance, please call your local health department or **1-877-PA-HEALTH (1-877-724-3258).**

Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) provides this guidance based on available information about COVID-19 and is subject to change.

On December 27, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) updated their [guidelines](#) for isolation and quarantine periods for the general public. Based on these updated recommendations, the Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) is updating guidance for individuals infected with and exposed to COVID-19. This guidance, which replaces [PA-HAN-607](#) provides clarification on isolation and quarantine guidance based on vaccination status. Additional HAN messages are currently being created or revised to reflect these changes.

This guidance applies to COVID-19 vaccines currently authorized for emergency use by the [U.S. Food and Drug Administration \(FDA\)](#), and to COVID-19 vaccines that have been authorized for emergency use by the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#).

Please note that these recommendations only apply to the general public. Return to work guidance for individuals with COVID-19 in healthcare settings can be found in PA-HAN-614.

Currently authorized vaccines in the United States are highly effective at protecting vaccinated people against symptomatic and severe COVID-19. Data from clinical trials showed that a booster shot increased the immune response in trial participants who finished a Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna primary series 6 months earlier or who received a J&J/Janssen single-dose vaccine 2 months earlier. With an increased immune response, people should have improved protection against getting infected with COVID-19. For Pfizer-BioNTech and J&J/Janssen, clinical trials also showed that a booster shot helped prevent severe disease. They are at substantially reduced risk of severe illness and death from COVID-19 compared with unvaccinated people. Boosters are recommended for all adults aged 16 and older.

This guidance is NOT applicable to healthcare settings. Additionally, this guidance does NOT apply to non-healthcare congregate settings (e.g., prisons, shelters, schools), nor does it apply to people who are at increased risk for serious disease. As additional guidance comes from CDC, future HANs will address these specific settings in more detail.

Recommendation for Individuals Who Test Positive for COVID-19

Regardless of vaccination status, anyone who tests positive for COVID-19 must:

- Isolate at home for 5 days. As much as possible,
 - Stay in a specific room away from other people and pets in the home.
 - Use a separate bathroom.
 - Wear a **mask** around other people in the home.

If the person with COVID-19 either has no symptoms or has resolved or improving symptoms (including fever) after Day 5 of isolation, the person with COVID-19 may leave their house provided they wear a [well-fitting mask](#) when around other people.

All persons who test positive for COVID-19 are recommended to wear a mask while around other people during Days 6 through 10. Day 0 is defined as either the date of symptom onset, or the date the test specimen was collected if the patient is asymptomatic. If someone develops symptoms consistent with COVID-19, testing is recommended regardless of vaccination or prior infection status.

Individuals Who Do NOT Need to Quarantine After Exposure to COVID-19

The following groups of individuals do NOT need to quarantine after being exposed (i.e., close contact*) to someone with COVID-19:

- People who have received a booster vaccination and more than 2 weeks have passed;

- People who have completed the primary series of Pfizer or Moderna vaccine within the last 6 months and thus are not yet eligible for the booster vaccination;
- People who have completed the primary series of the J&J vaccine within the last 2 months;

Heterologous (mix-and-match) [dosing](#) may occur for the booster dose.

Individuals who can be categorized into these groups do not need to quarantine at home; however, they do need to wear a **mask** around others for 10 days. Additionally, these individuals should be tested on Day 5 after exposure, if possible. If this test is positive, the individual should follow the recommendations above for individuals who test positive.

Individuals Who DO Need to Quarantine After Exposure to COVID-19

The following groups of individuals DO need to quarantine after being exposed to someone with COVID-19:

- People who have completed the primary series of Pfizer or Moderna vaccine over 6 months ago and have not received a booster vaccination;
- People who have completed the primary series of the J&J vaccine over 2 months ago and are not boosted;
- People who are not vaccinated.

Individuals who are categorized into these groups must quarantine at home for 5 days, and then wear a **mask** around others for an additional 5 days. If the person is absolutely unable to quarantine, they must consistently wear a mask for 10 days. Additionally, these individuals should be tested on Day 5 after exposure if possible (the day of exposure is considered Day 0). If this test is positive, the individual should follow recommendation above for individuals who test positive.

This guidance does NOT apply to healthcare settings, non-healthcare congregate settings, or persons at higher risk for severe disease. Additional guidance is underway for these populations. Isolation guidance for healthcare workers is found in [PA-HAN-614](#).

* An exposed individual or close contact is further defined in [HAN 533](#).

If you have questions about this guidance, please call your local health department or **1-877-PA-HEALTH (1-877-724-3258)**.

Individuals interested in receiving further PA-HANs are encouraged to register at <https://han.pa.gov/>.

Categories of Health Alert messages:

Health Alert: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

This information is current as of December 30, 2021 but may be modified in the future. We will continue to post updated information regarding the most common questions about this subject.