



## Current COVID-19 isolation guidelines: Suggested talking points

- **Last week, the [Washington Post reported](#) that the CDC may loosen its COVID-19 isolation guidelines, but changes haven't been announced.**
  - According to the potential updated guidelines, people who test positive for COVID-19 would only need to isolate until they've been fever-free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication and their symptoms are improving.
  - We don't know if these guidelines will involve masking or if there will be different guidelines for higher-risk people who are infected with COVID-19.
  - The CDC is expected to release its new guidelines for public comment in April.
- **[Current CDC guidelines](#) recommend that people who test positive for COVID-19 isolate for five days.**
  - The isolation period starts at the onset of symptoms or, if you do not have symptoms, the test date.
  - During the five-day isolation period, the CDC recommends wearing [a high-quality mask](#) around others, avoiding travel, [improving ventilation](#) in your home, and using a separate bathroom and personal items from others in your household.
  - If your symptoms do not improve within five days, the CDC says you should continue to isolate until you are fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication and your symptoms are improving.
  - If you know you were exposed to the COVID-19 virus, [the CDC recommends](#) wearing a high-quality mask around others for 10 days after exposure and watching for symptoms such as a fever, cough, or shortness of breath. If you develop symptoms, get tested as soon as possible and isolate until you get your result.
- **The contagiousness of COVID-19 has not changed.**
  - If you are sick with COVID-19, you can infect others for [five to 12 days](#), or longer.
  - Moderately or severely immunocompromised patients may [remain infectious beyond 20 days](#).
  - [Staying up to date on COVID-19 vaccines](#), wearing a high-quality mask in public spaces, and improving ventilation at indoor gatherings are all effective precautions to protect yourself against COVID-19.



## Current COVID-19 isolation guidelines: Frequently asked questions

### 1. How long should I isolate if I test positive for COVID-19?

[Current CDC guidelines](#) recommend that, if you test positive for COVID-19, you isolate for five days from the onset of symptoms. If you do not have symptoms, you should isolate for five days from the test date.

During your five-day isolation period, wear [a high-quality mask](#) around others, avoid travel, [improve ventilation](#) in your home, and use a separate bathroom and personal items from others in your household.

If your symptoms do not improve within five days, the CDC says you should continue to isolate until you are fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication and your symptoms are improving.

If you're sick with COVID-19, you are likely contagious [for five to 12 days](#), but some people may [remain infectious beyond 20 days](#).

### 2. What should I do if I've been exposed to COVID-19?

If you know you were exposed to the COVID-19 virus, [the CDC recommends](#) wearing a high-quality mask around others for 10 days after exposure and watching for symptoms such as a fever, cough, or shortness of breath. If you develop symptoms, get tested as soon as possible and isolate until you get your result.

### 3. How can I get tested for COVID-19?

You can get tested for COVID-19 at a doctor's office or at home. There are [two types of tests](#) to identify a current COVID-19 infection: PCR tests and antigen tests.

PCR tests are the "gold standard" for COVID-19 tests, as these are the most accurate. You can get a PCR test from a health care provider. It may take up to three days to receive results.

Antigen tests are easily accessible rapid tests that produce results within 15 to 30 minutes. The CDC says positive antigen test results are very accurate and reliable. However, a negative test result [does not rule out infection](#). Antigen tests are less likely to detect a COVID-19 infection than a PCR test from your health care provider, especially if you don't have symptoms.

[The FDA recommends](#) taking two antigen tests 48 hours apart if you have symptoms or three antigen tests 48 hours apart if you do not have symptoms. You can order free COVID-19 antigen tests [through the U.S. Postal Service](#) or purchase them at your local drug store.