

Guidance for Quarantine and Mask Use

In addition to social distancing and good hygiene practices, principle components for reducing the transmission of COVID-19 among North Dakota citizens include testing, isolation of cases, quarantine of contacts and universal use of face masks. This guidance allows for the consideration of face mask use to determine if a person exposed to someone with COVID-19 will need to quarantine.

[Evidence](#) is showing that masking can be highly effective in reducing the risk of virus transmission from an infected individual (the source) to their close contacts. Masking can reduce the risk of virus spread from an infected person and reduce virus exposure to the close contact. Masking works well and with minimal training can be implemented almost universally.

Contact tracing and quarantining contacts is also effective in reducing transmission of COVID-19. However, it has limitations:

- People can transmit COVID-19 prior to symptom onset and asymptotically.
- People need to be tested, diagnosed and reported to the health department so they can be interviewed to identify their close contacts.
- People who are infected, need to cooperate fully with disease investigators.
- People who are named as close contacts need to comply with quarantine recommendations.
- There are numerous exemptions to quarantine recommendations so people can continue to work in industries and jobs that are deemed critical or essential.

With this guidance, close contacts will continue to be defined as individuals who have been within six feet of an infected person for a total of 15 minutes during a 24-hour period.

Close contacts may quarantine for the full 14-day quarantine period. There are options for close contacts to reduce the number of days they will need to quarantine following an exposure to a COVID-positive individual.

- If you remain symptom-free, you may reduce your quarantine period from 14 days to 10 days.
- If you receive a negative result from a viral COVID-19 test (PCR or rapid antigen), you can reduce your quarantine to 7 days. Your test can be collected no earlier than 48 hours prior to your quarantine release date. Therefore, the earliest you can be tested is day 6 your exposure date.

After stopping quarantine, you should

- Watch for symptoms until 14 days after exposure.
- If you have symptoms, immediately self-isolate and contact your local public health authority or healthcare provider.
- Wear a mask, stay at least 6 feet from others, wash your hands, avoid crowds, and take other steps to [prevent the spread of COVID-19](#).

You must continue to quarantine while awaiting test results. Residents of long-term care facilities and other congregate living settings are exempt from the new guidance and should continue to quarantine for the full 14 days.

A quarantine calculator can be found at health.nd.gov/closecontact.

Close contacts will still need to be quarantined for 14 days from their last exposure unless both the infected person and close contact were wearing a mask at all times during the exposure, this would exempt the contact from being quarantined.

This guidance only applies to face masks and cloth face coverings that comply with current CDC recommendations found [here](#). This guidance does not apply to face shields. Care must be taken to ensure activities that require removing masks are done only when people can socially distance themselves appropriately.

Except as noted below, the quarantine exception applies to most non-health care settings. This exception includes, but may not be limited to:

- Child care centers where staff and older children are able to wear a mask.
- Group homes
- K-12 schools and preschools
- Colleges and universities
- Work settings
- Social interactions

- Other settings where both the infected person and contact were masked during the exposure.

This exception does not apply to household contacts.

People, who because of mask use, are exempted from quarantine should:

- Wear a mask while around others;
- Watch for symptoms for 14 days and be tested if symptom(s) occur;
- If you become aware that you have been potentially exposed, consider being tested 7-10 days after the last exposure.
- Practice social distancing, including avoiding large crowds and gatherings.

People who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 will still be required to isolate for at least 10 days, with absence of fever for at least 24 hours and improvement in symptoms.

Case investigation staff will continue to interview infected people and will work with cases to provide guidance on contact notification. This will include recommendations on whether quarantine or self-monitoring is appropriate for the exposure.

References

Wang Y, Tian H, Zhang L, *et al.* Reduction of secondary transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in households by face mask use, disinfection and social distancing: a cohort study in Beijing, China. *BMJ Global Health* 2020;5:e002794. doi:10.1136/bmjgh-2020-002794

Doungngern P, Suphanchaimat R, Panjangampatthana A, Janekrongtham C, Ruampoom D, Daochaeng N, *et al.* Case-control study of use of personal protective measures and risk for SARS-CoV-2 infection, Thailand. *Emerg Infect Dis.* 2020 Nov [date cited]. <https://doi.org/10.3201/eid2611.203003>