



## COVID-19

This advice is intended for people who are close contacts of a person with confirmed coronavirus disease (COVID-19), do not have any symptoms and have been asked to quarantine at home. This guidance does not apply to people who have been asked to quarantine in a designated facility.

### What does being a close contact mean?

You have been in close contact with someone who has confirmed coronavirus disease but you do not have any symptoms yourself. Close contact means that you had face-to-face contact within 1 metre or were in a closed space for more than 15 minutes with a person with COVID-19. This contact happened while the person with COVID-19 was still “infectious”, i.e. from 2 days before to 14 days after their symptoms began. For example, you may be someone who:

1. Lives in the same household as a person with COVID-19
2. Works closely in the same environment as a person with COVID-19
3. Sat in the same classroom as a person with COVID-19
4. Attended the same gathering as a person with COVID-19
5. Provided direct care for a person with COVID-19 in a healthcare setting without using the proper personal protective equipment
6. Sat within two seats (1 metre) in any direction of a person with COVID-19 case in any kind of vehicle including buses, minibus taxis, etc.
7. Served as a crew member in the section of an aircraft where a person with COVID-19 was seated

### 1. Why have I been asked to quarantine at home?

2. You have been exposed to a person with COVID-19 while they were still able to transmit infection. It is therefore possible that you have been infected with the new coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2). Staying at home in quarantine will help to control the possible spread of the virus to your friends, relatives and your wider community. In particular, staying at home will help prevent possible spread to the most vulnerable people in our communities, who are risk for severe illness.
3. The coronavirus is spread by droplets. When an infected person coughs, exhales or sneezes, they release droplets of fluid containing virus particles into the air. Other people can become infected by breathing in these droplets if they are standing within a few meters from the infected person. The larger droplets can also fall on nearby surfaces and objects. The virus can survive on hard surfaces (plastic and stainless steel, for example) for up to 72 hours. Other people can become infected when they touch contaminated surface, then touch their eyes, nose or mouth. People cannot be infected through the skin.
4. If you understand how coronavirus disease spreads, this will help you to understand how to prevent spreading the infection to others. Stay a few meters away from other people, and at frequent intervals wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or sanitise your hands using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

### 5. What does my home quarantine mean for other people who live in my household?

6. If you live with other people, as far as possible, you should stay in a separate room and away from other people in your household. If a separate room is not possible, try to keep to one area of your home, at least 2 meters (3 steps) away from other people. Limit contact with any pets and animals. Wash your hands regularly using soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use alcohol-based hand sanitizers (containing at least 60% alcohol). If possible, use a separate bathroom. If you have to share a bathroom, clean the bathroom after every use. If you share a kitchen, avoid using the kitchen at the same time as other people. If possible, have your meals in your separate room/ area and use separate utensils.

### 7. How long will I need to quarantine at home?

8. You can end your home quarantine 14 days after your last contact with a person with COVID-19. No laboratory tests will be done at any time during your home quarantine period, unless you develop symptoms.

### 9. Do other members of my household need to stay at home during my quarantine period?

10. If you live with other people, and you are able to stay physically apart from them, they can continue their usual activities outside the home. If you are unable to stay apart from members of your household, they should also quarantine for the same period.

### What symptoms do I need to monitor for during my home quarantine?

If you develop a fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, muscle aches or other flu-like symptoms from 2 to 14 days after your close contact with a person with COVID-19, you should immediately contact your healthcare provider. If you become ill, you should cover your mouth and nose if you sneeze or cough with disposable face tissue or into your elbow. Dispose of tissues then immediately wash your hands. Wash your hands regularly using soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use alcohol-based hand sanitizers (containing at least 60% alcohol). Refer to guidance on **what to do if I think I have coronavirus disease**.

This advice is intended for:

1. People with confirmed coronavirus disease, i.e. those with a positive laboratory test result – who have been asked to isolate at home
2. Those living in households with someone who has confirmed coronavirus disease

### 3. What does a positive laboratory test result mean?

4. Your healthcare provider took a specimen from you because you had symptoms and met the current criteria for testing (refer to guidance on **what to do if I think I have coronavirus disease**). This specimen was sent to a laboratory. The laboratory tested your specimen for genetic material from the new coronavirus. This virus has been named SARS-CoV-2. The test was reported as either positive or negative.
5. If your test was reported to be positive, then genetic material from the coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) was found in your specimen and you have confirmed coronavirus disease. This disease is now also called COVID-19.

## 6. Who will be in touch with me from the government or the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD)?

7. Your healthcare provider (your GP or local clinic) is primarily responsible for your care. However, you may be called, visited at home or advised by government officials, community health workers or by the NICD. Once you have confirmed coronavirus disease, the purpose of this contact is to assess if your home environment is suitable for isolation, to assist you and members of your household adhere to the home isolation recommendations and to monitor your illness. If you are visited at home, officials will wear personal protective equipment such as masks, gloves and aprons to prevent themselves from becoming infected, maintain a distance of 2 meters and will not enter your home, unless necessary. Visiting officials may provide a care pack to you (the contents of this pack will vary). The number of times you are contacted by government officials or the NICD is subject to change.
8. Your health care provider, government officials or NICD will also ask you to make a list of all the people you have had close contact with from 2 days before you became ill. These people will also be required to self-quarantine at home for 14 days and monitor themselves for symptoms. Refer to guidance on **what to do if I am a close contact of a person with confirmed disease and am asked to home quarantine**.

## 9. If I have a positive laboratory test result, am I at risk for more severe illness?

10. The laboratory test will not be able to tell you if you are at risk for more severe illness because the result is only reported as positive or negative for the coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2). However, you would have been assessed by your healthcare provider in terms of your current coronavirus illness and your other risk factors for more severe illness (i.e. older age, serious underlying medical conditions such as diabetes mellitus, heart disease, lung disease and immunosuppression, etc.).
11. If you were asked to isolate at home, your healthcare provider has assessed that you have a mild illness that can be managed at home, you have no/few risk factors for severe illness and your home environment is suitable for isolation. However, some people with coronavirus disease may worsen at home and need admission to hospital. It is very important that you carefully monitor your symptoms throughout your illness and look out for emergency warning signs – refer to **How do I care for myself at home?**

## 12. What does my home isolation mean for me?

13. What you can do  
– Stay at home  
– If necessary, talk to your employer and let them know that you cannot come to work.  
– You should cancel all your routine medical and dental appointments.  
– If you have access to the internet, you can order your shopping or medications online but tell delivery drivers to leave any items for collection outside your house. Delivery drivers should not come into your house at all.

### What you cannot do

- Go to work, school, or any public areas.
- Use any public transport (including buses, minibus taxis and taxi cabs). Do not travel.
- If possible, you should not even go out to buy food, medicines or other essentials. You should ask friends or relatives to help you to buy groceries and essentials.

- You should not go outside to exercise unless you can maintain a safe distance from others in an outdoor space.
- You should not have any visitors in your home during your isolation period. Do keep in touch with your relatives, friends and colleagues over the phone, internet or by using social media.

#### • **How do I care for myself at home?**

- Most people who get sick with coronavirus disease will have only a mild illness and should recover at home. You may continue to experience the typical symptoms which include a fever, cough and mild shortness of breath. Most people with mild illness will start feeling better within a week of first symptoms. Have your healthcare provider's contact information on hand for emergencies – this could be your GP or your nearest local clinic/ hospital.
- Get rest at home and drink enough water/ clear fluids during the day to make sure that your urine stays a pale clear colour. There are no specific antiviral treatments recommended for coronavirus disease. You can take over-the-counter medications if you have fever or pain. Use these according to the instructions on the packet or label and do not exceed the recommended dose. You should continue taking any other prescribed chronic medication.
- Monitor your symptoms carefully. If your symptoms get worse, call your healthcare provider immediately. If you develop any emergency warning signs, get medical attention immediately. Emergency warning signs include: trouble breathing, chest pain or pressure in your chest that does not go away, coughing up blood, becoming confused, severe sleepiness, blue lips or face. If you have any warning signs, you or a member of your household should call your nearest hospital or emergency services immediately and notify them that you have confirmed coronavirus disease. Avoid taking public transport to the facility – either use private transport (preferably with windows rolled-down) or call emergency services for an ambulance if required. You should wear a face mask if you travel to seek hospital care.

#### • **How long will I need to isolate at home?**

- You can end your home isolation 14 days after your illness began. Your illness began on the day that you first developed symptoms, not on the day that a specimen was collected or on the day that the laboratory test was reported to be positive. If you were tested with no symptoms (note – this is not currently recommended) and had a positive test result, you can end your home isolation 14 days after the positive specimen was collected.
- After a 14-day home isolation period, you are considered to no longer be infectious, i.e. you are very unlikely to transmit infection to others. No follow-up laboratory tests will be done during or at the end of your home isolation period. Laboratory tests that only look for coronavirus genetic material in specimens cannot tell us whether you can still transmit infection to others because a positive test may only pick up pieces of dead virus.

#### • **How long will other members of my household need to stay at home?**

- All members of your household are considered to be close contacts. They should follow the guidance on **what to do if I am a close contact of a person with confirmed disease and am asked to home quarantine**.
- his advice is intended for people who meet the current criteria for testing for coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and are not admitted to a healthcare facility.

#### • **What are the criteria for COVID-19 testing in people who are not admitted to hospital?**

- These criteria are regularly updated by the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD). Refer to the **case definition for person under investigation (PUI)**. You will be tested only if you meet the PUI criteria, which includes having symptoms of a respiratory illness of recent or sudden onset.

### Why should I not be tested for coronavirus disease if I am concerned but have no symptoms?

There are a number of reasons why we do not recommend testing of a person with no symptoms, even if you are a close contact of a confirmed COVID-19 case, or have recently travelled to a country where COVID-19 is circulating in the community:

1. A negative test result in a person with no symptoms does not mean that you do not have COVID-19. You could still be in the early stage of COVID-19 and develop symptoms later. Therefore, testing when you do not have symptoms could give a false-negative result.
2. Even if your laboratory test result was negative, you would still need to stay at home in quarantine for 14 days if you travelled to a region with high transmission or had close contact with a person with confirmed COVID-19. Refer to guidance on **what to do if I am a close contact of a person with confirmed disease and am asked to home quarantine**.
3. If you tested negative and mistakenly interpreted this to mean that you were not infected, you could go back to your usual activities and spread the virus while you still had an early infection.
4. There is a shortage of laboratory tests globally, and we need to reserve our valuable laboratory testing resources for those who are sick and for those groups of people where we can use these test results for public health good.

### 5. How do I get tested?

6. The exact testing process may be different in different provinces and between the public- and private-sectors. In general, you need to first contact your healthcare provider. This may be your GP or your local clinic/ hospital. You should phone ahead to your healthcare provider, if possible, and find out what the exact process is for you to be tested. If you cannot get hold of your healthcare provider, you can try to call your nearest testing laboratory for information. If you have internet access, you can look for specific information on these testing laboratory websites. If you do not need emergency medical care, you should not visit a hospital emergency unit for testing. Some hospitals or GPs may refer you to an off-site testing facility. The NHLS and some private laboratories offer testing at mobile facilities. You will need to pay for tests done at private laboratories.

### 7. What specimens will be collected from me and what do the test results mean?

8. The most commonly collected specimen is a swab collected through your nose. If you have a wet cough, you may be asked to produce a sputum specimen into a jar for testing. This specimen will be sent to a pathology laboratory. The laboratory will test your specimen for genetic material from the new coronavirus. This virus has been named SARS-CoV-2. The test will be reported as either positive or negative. If your test is reported as positive, this means that genetic material from the coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) was found in your specimen and you have confirmed coronavirus disease. Please refer to guidance on **what to do if I test positive for coronavirus disease and am asked to home isolate**. If your test is reported as negative, this may not necessarily exclude COVID-19 for a number of reasons. You should therefore complete your period of home quarantine as you have potentially been exposed to the infection, and you should only have a repeat test if this is advised by your healthcare provider.

#### **9. Who will the test result be sent to?**

10. Your test results will be sent to your healthcare provider. If have agreed to be contacted with your test results, your test result may be sent directly to you.

#### **11. What should I do while I wait for my test results?**

12. While you wait for your results, you are advised to self-quarantine at home. Refer to guidance on **what to do if I am a close contact of a person with confirmed disease and am asked to home quarantine.**
13. South Africa is currently affected by the global pandemic of COVID-19, a predominantly respiratory disease caused by the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). COVID-19 appears to cause more severe disease and deaths in elderly persons and those living with underlying chronic illnesses.(1) We aim to address whether or not pneumococcal conjugate vaccine has a role in reducing morbidity and mortality in the South African context.

#### **14. COVID-19 pneumonia**

15. The reported morbidity and mortality from COVID-19 is predominantly due to development of a primary viral pneumonia in persons unable to suppress the replication of the virus.(2) This usually occurs 7 to 10 days into the illness, often resulting in Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome. Persons most at risk of developing severe COVID-19 are those with underlying diabetes, chronic lung disease, coronary artery disease, any form of immune suppression or those  $\geq 65$  years of age.(3)(1)(4)(5)
16. Unlike influenza, there is little evidence to support secondary bacterial infection as a major cause of morbidity or mortality following SARS or Middle Eastern Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) disease (two corona viruses closely related to SARS-CoV-2).(6) However, as time progresses there may be more case reports of pneumococcal pneumonia following COVID-19 disease in the China and Europe. Recommendations in China for COVID-19 patients who were deteriorating were to give broad-spectrum antibiotics early to prevent secondary infection.(7) To date, no evidence has been forthcoming of SARS-CoV-2 and pneumococcal co-infection.

#### **17. WHAT ROLE DO MASKS PLAY IN THE PREVENTION OF COVID-19?**

18. Masks may help prevent the transmission of COVID-19 by stopping the spread of respiratory droplets when people talk, sneeze or cough.

#### **19. CAN I WEAR THE SAME MASK ALL DAY EVERY DAY?**

20. No, you will need 2 masks so that you can wash one and wear one. Wash your mask daily with soap and hot water. The mask is best dried in the sun and ironed. Do not share your mask with anyone.

