



## Isolation vs. Quarantine Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

### What is the difference between Isolation and Quarantine?

**Quarantine** keeps someone who was in close contact with someone who has COVID-19 away from others.

**Isolation** keeps someone who feels sick, or someone who does not feel sick, but tested positive for COVID-19, away from others. This includes staying away from others in their own home. Someone only needs to isolate if they have been told by a medical professional that they have COVID-19 due to their symptoms or a positive test.

Quarantine and isolation are **both** used to protect other people from getting sick with COVID-19. This [CDC graphic](#) helps explain the difference between isolation and quarantine.

(<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/COVID-19-Quarantine-vs-Isolation.pdf>)

### How long should a person be in quarantine after they have close contact with someone with COVID-19?

A person exposed to COVID-19 might become sick in the next 14 days. This is why they should be in quarantine for 14 days. While in quarantine, they should check themselves for fever, cough, or other symptoms of COVID-19.

Please see the link to [Alameda County Quarantine and Isolation Guidance](#) in multiple languages (<https://covid-19.acgov.org/isolation-quarantine.page?#resources>)

### How long does someone who tested positive AND feels sick due to COVID-19, need to be in Isolation?

The person needs to be isolated until they meet all three of the following:

- At least 10 days since symptoms first appeared, **AND**
- At least 24 hours with no fever (without fever-reducing medication) **AND**
- Symptoms have improved.

Although this is sometimes called the 10+1 rule, it does **NOT** mean that the timeframe must be 11 days. The 1 day can easily be part of the 10 days, depending on when a person starts to feel better. If they meet the three rules above, they could be released from isolation as soon as 10 days after their first day of feeling sick. Instructions for self-releasing from isolation may be found [here](#).



**If a person tested positive for COVID-19 but they never had fever, cough, or any other symptoms of COVID-19, how long do they need to isolate?**

The person needs to be isolated for 10 days after the positive test. For example, if the person tested positive on January 1 but never had ANY symptoms, they can leave isolation on January 11.

**What if I test negative for COVID-19 during my isolation period?**

Alameda County does **NOT** recommend that you get tested during your isolation period. Even if you have a single negative test, it does not mean you are able to leave isolation. You still need to stay in isolation as defined above.

**What if I test negative for COVID-19 during my quarantine period?**

Even if you test negative during the quarantine period, you still need to remain in quarantine for a period of 14 days because you may start feeling sick at any time during the 14 days.

**What if I develop symptoms and test positive for COVID-19 during my quarantine period?**

While in quarantine, if a medical professional tells you that you have COVID-19 because of your symptoms or a positive test, you will then begin isolation as described above, for at least 10 more days.

**Do you need a negative test to be released from isolation or quarantine?**

No, you do not need a negative test to be released from isolation or quarantine if you meet the criteria above. Instructions for when to release from isolation or quarantine can be found [here](https://covid-19.acgov.org/isolation-quarantine.page?). (<https://covid-19.acgov.org/isolation-quarantine.page?>)

**Do I need a doctor's note to be released from isolation or quarantine?**

No, you do not need a doctor's note to be released from isolation or quarantine.

**What makes someone a "close contact" of a person with COVID-19?**

People are considered a close contact if they stayed within 6 feet of a COVID-19 infected person for more than 15 minutes after that person was diagnosed or up to two days before they first developed symptoms. This applies even if both people are wearing a face covering, mask, or a N95 respirator.

Close contact can also take place during brief interactions where there is unprotected direct contact with the COVID-19 infected person's body secretions (sneezing, coughing, sharing



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utensils, saliva). Cumulative exposures that add up to 15 minutes within a day may be considered close contact depending on intensity of exposure (e.g., did the person have multiple interactions in a confined space with a symptomatic COVID-19 infected person).

Close contacts do not include healthcare workers who use infection control precautions, including all recommended personal protective equipment, while caring for someone with COVID-19.