

## Contact Tracing Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)

### What is contact tracing?

Contact tracing has been used for a very long time to limit the spread of infectious diseases. It requires finding people who may have been in contact with someone who has an infectious disease. These people are called "contacts." If you find contacts and prevent them from spreading the disease to other people, you can interrupt and slow the spread of the disease.

### Why do public health departments conduct contact tracing?

- People in close contact with someone infected with an infectious disease, such as COVID-19, are at higher risk of becoming infected. These people are considered "exposed".
- Exposed people may or may not get sick.
- They could potentially infect others and further the spread of disease.
- Educating people about their exposure status will help them to get care and treatment if they do become ill.
- It will also help to prevent further transmission of the infection.
- Public health routinely conducts contact tracing for diseases such as tuberculosis and measles, as well as for certain sexually transmitted diseases.

### Who is considered to be a contact of a person who tests positive for COVID-19?

There is most interest in following up with people who have had close contact with someone who tests positive:

- People who share a household/living space
- People who have spent some time (more than 10 minutes) within 6 feet of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.

### As a contact of someone with COVID-19, what will I need to do?

You will need to put yourself into self-quarantine and monitor your symptoms until 14 days from the time of your exposure. We are all expected to stay at home because of the Governor's order, but you will also need to:

- minimize contact with people and pets in your home
- stay in your own room and use your own bathroom, if possible
- avoid sharing any personal items such as dishes, towels, and bedding.

This helps prevent spreading the virus to your own close contacts, if you are infected. There is guidance on CDC's website on how to do that, which applies to those who are infected even if

they show no symptoms. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html>.

You may or may not be infected, and even if you're infected you may not become ill. Even if you're not feeling ill, you may be able to spread the virus to others, that's why you are asked to self-quarantine.

### **How do I monitor my symptoms?**

If you have been identified as a contact, you should monitor for symptoms twice a day (morning and evening) for 14 days from the date of last contact with the original patient or for 14 days after the original patient's isolation ends if you have been in continued contact with them throughout their illness, i.e. you are members of the same household, fellow residents of congregate living facilities, etc. Health Department personnel will give you specific instructions.

### **Will the fact that I am a contact of someone with COVID-19 be known to others?**

NO! The Health Department keeps the names of COVID-19 cases and contacts confidential.

### **If I have to self-quarantine, how can I explain to my employer why I cannot come to work?**

The Health Department will provide you with a letter stating that you are requested to remain in quarantine for 14 days following the date of your potential exposure to COVID-19. You may choose to share that letter with your employer.

### **Will I be informed of who I was exposed to who had COVID-19?**

The Health Department keeps the names of COVID-19 cases and contacts **confidential**. You may think you know who that person might be, but you are urged not to jump to conclusions. We ask you to treat anyone's health information as confidential.

### **I live alone. How will I get food and other supplies?**

Arrange with a friend or relative to bring groceries and leave them outside your door. If you are unable to do that, there are resources that you can take advantage of.

- Howard County REACT has launched a critical grocery and medication delivery service. Place your order for PICKUP with any Howard County Giant, Safeway, Harris Teeter, or Walgreens (medications only). Choose a pickup date and time at least 24 hours in advance. For more information about placing an order, call **410-782-0432**.

**Does the Health Department have someone who can answer my additional questions about this?**

Yes, call the Health Department COVID-19 Health Information Line at **410-313- 6284**.

**Does the Health Department have someone who can discuss this with me in Spanish/another language?**

The Health Department can arrange for a conversation with you many different languages, upon request. There is also information about COVID-19 available from the Maryland Department of Health in multiple languages <https://goc.maryland.gov/covid19-translations/>

**Other resources:**

Resources for people exposed to a person infected with COVID-19

- ["Self-monitoring and self-quarantine"](#)
- ["Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Home"](#)
- ["What to do if you start feeling ill"](#)

Links for people sick with symptoms matching COVID-19:

- ["10 ways to manage respiratory symptoms at home"](#)
- ["When is it safe to leave?"](#)
- ["Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Home"](#)
- ["Steps to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 if you are sick"](#)