



## UPDATED COVID-19 QUARANTINE TIMEFRAMES Guidance Update

Date: December 3, 2020

**Public Health Message Type:**  Alert  Advisory  Update  Information

**Intended Audience:**  All public health partners  Healthcare providers  Infection preventionists  
 Local health departments  Schools/childcare centers  ACOs  
 Animal health professionals  Other:

### Key Points or Updates:

- (1) The incubation period of SARS-Cov-2 is between 2-14 days. It is for this reason that CDC and NJDOH have recommended a 14-day quarantine period. This quarantine period for persons who might have been exposed to COVID-19 has proven to be an effective strategy to prevent further transmission. It may, however, impose significant personal and community burdens in some circumstances and may dissuade individuals from responding to contact tracer outreach if the length of quarantine is perceived to be a burden.
- (2) While 14 days is the maximum incubation period for SARS-CoV-2, the median incubation is about 5 days.
- (3) On 12/2/20, CDC released [guidance](#) with options to shorten the quarantine time period, which, while it risks being less effective than the currently recommended 14-day quarantine, it may reduce the burden and increase willingness to adhere to public health recommendations.
- (4) Given substantial community spread of COVID-19 throughout New Jersey, NJDOH continues to recommend quarantine for 14 days **where feasible** to reduce the risk of spread of COVID-19 and particularly for persons who live with or care for persons at high risk of severe complications for COVID-19 (older adults, persons with underlying conditions or obesity, and pregnant women).
- (5) Persons who live or work in congregate settings that care for persons at high risk for severe complications (e.g., long-term care and assisted living facilities, group homes, correctional facilities) need to continue to quarantine for 14-days, unless staffing shortages would cause serious harm or danger to public health or safety.
- (6) Outside of these high-risk congregate settings, if a 14-day quarantine is not feasible, the following options are acceptable alternatives:

- a. Quarantine can end after Day 10 without testing **and** if no symptoms have been reported during daily monitoring.
- b. When COVID-19 testing resources are [sufficient and available](#), persons exposed to COVID-19 should consider testing. Quarantine can end after Day 7 if the test result is negative **and** if no symptoms were reported during daily monitoring. The specimen should be collected between day 5-7 (not earlier than day 5), but quarantine cannot be discontinued earlier than after Day 7. The person should remain in quarantine until the results are received and are negative. If the test result is delayed, quarantine should be continued until after Day 10.

(7) Additional considerations:

- a. Quarantine can be shortened only **if persons remain asymptomatic** throughout the shortened quarantine period; if they **continue to monitor for symptoms** through Day 14; and if they are counseled to follow COVID-19 prevention recommendations (e.g., social distancing, mask use, hand hygiene, cleaning and disinfection, avoiding crowds) through Day 14.
- b. Persons under quarantine should be advised that if they develop symptoms of COVID-19, they should immediately self-isolate and contact the local health department (LHD) and their healthcare provider to report this change in clinical status.

**Action Items:**

- (1) Long-term care and congregate settings caring for persons at increased risk for severe illness need to continue to implement a 14-day quarantine period unless staffing shortages would cause serious harm or danger to public health or safety.
- (2) Outside of high-risk congregate settings, when speaking with persons exposed to COVID-19 (i.e., close contacts), LHDs and contact tracing staff should recommend that *if feasible*, persons should quarantine for 14 days, particularly if they live with or care for someone at risk for severe illness. This is the most effective way to protect their family, friends, and other close contacts and to prevent further transmission.
- (3) If a 14-day quarantine is not feasible or if it will cause a significant burden or decrease compliance, LHDs should provide the 7-Day (with testing on Day 5-7) or the 10-Day (no testing or delayed test results) quarantine options.
- (4) *If local resources allow*, LHDs should actively monitor contacts for symptoms for 14 days. If LHDs are implementing the [NJDOH Case Investigation and Contact Tracing Prioritization Recommendations](#), unless contact monitoring is automated, LHDs should advise contacts to self-monitor for symptoms for 14 days and that if symptoms develop, they should

immediately isolate, contact their healthcare provider, seek COVID-19 testing, and notify the LHD. LHDs should also advise individuals to strictly adhere to COVID-19 prevention recommendations (e.g., social distancing, mask usage, hand hygiene, avoiding crowds, cleaning and disinfection) for 14 days.

**Contact Information:**

- The Communicable Disease Service: (609) 826-5964 during business hours

**References and Resources:**

- CDC Options to Reduce Quarantine for Contacts of Persons with SARS-CoV-2 Infection Using Symptom Monitoring and Diagnostic Testing, 12/2/20:  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/more/scientific-brief-options-to-reduce-quarantine.html>
- New Jersey COVID-19 Testing Site Finder: <https://covid19.nj.gov/pages/testing#test-sites>