

CONSIDERATIONS FOR QUARANTINE OF CLOSE CONTACTS WITHIN THE NEW TESTING STRATEGY FOR COVID-19

INTERIM TOOLKIT

18 DECEMBER 2020

Purpose

This document is a toolkit to assist provinces/districts and other stakeholders for planning quarantine for close contacts of Covid-19 patients in the context of the phase of ongoing widespread community transmission. This toolkit should be read in conjunction with the National Guidelines for Quarantine and Isolation in Relation to Covid-19 Exposure and Infection and the National Guidelines for Contact Tracing for Covid-19 in South Africa.

This toolkit is restricted to the use of quarantine for close contacts of confirmed or probable cases of Covid-19. It provides updated guidance for the implementation of quarantine, as well as when to start and end quarantine including additional guidance on various scenarios below to determine when you can end quarantine and be around others. The update is based on evidence on controlling the spread of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19, and scientific knowledge of the virus. The World Health Organization (WHO) and National Department of Health will continue to update these recommendations as new information becomes available.

Considerations for Quarantine of Close Contacts

The new testing strategy requires that all close contacts be tested for Covid-19. This means, as a close contact, you will be tested even if you do not show any Covid-19 symptoms. The new isolation and quarantine period is reduced from 14 days to 10 days. Therefore, all close contacts are still required to stay at home (quarantine) for a period of 10 days from the last date of exposure to the confirmed Covid-19 case. For close contacts of laboratory-confirmed Covid-19 case, it is recommended that such persons be quarantined for 10 days from the last time they were exposed to the case. In addition to quarantine, health authorities should encourage non-pharmaceutical interventions such as physical distancing of at least 1 metre, wearing of mask, combined with frequent hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette. Close contacts of a probable or suspected case should be encouraged to quarantine until the laboratory results prove that the probable or suspected cases are negative for Covid-19.

Specimen should be collected and tested for SARS-CoV-2 infection as soon as possible from all suspect Covid-19 cases and contacts who develop symptoms. Close contacts at highest risk of infection (that is, those with greater exposure, such as prolonged time in close proximity to a Covid-19 case) and/or those at high risk of developing severe disease if infected, regardless of the development of symptoms, should be prioritised. Ensure that all those involved in collection and transportation of specimens are trained in safe handling practices and spill decontamination procedures, and have sufficient and appropriate PPE.

It is recommended that all close contacts of confirmed Covid-19 cases be tested at least from day 8 following exposure to a person with Covid-19.

After testing, some close contacts will be found to be positive while other will be found negative for Covid-19. **Anyone who tests positive for Covid-19 is required to isolate for a period of 10 days, and meets the criteria for de-isolation. Close contacts that test negative are required to still continue to staying at home (quarantine), apart from others in order to prevent the spread of the virus, if they are still within the 10-day quarantine period.** This is because the time from exposure to Covid-19 to the moment when symptoms begin is, on average, 5 – 6 days and can range from 1 – 14 days. If you tested negative and complete the 10-day quarantine period and do not develop Covid-19 symptoms, you are advised to continue maintaining a physical distance; wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; cover your mouth and nose with a mask when around others; including observing other personal protective measures; you are also advised to continue monitoring yourself for any signs and symptoms of Covid-19 up to 14 days.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN QUARANTINE AND ISOLATION

Quarantine - Restricting activities and/or separating people who are not ill but may have been exposed to Covid-19. This can take place at home or in a designated facility for 10 days. If your quarantine starts at noon on day 1, then it would end at noon on the last day.

Isolation - Separating or keeping away from others people who are ill with symptoms of Covid-19 and/or have tested positive. This can take place at a health facility for those who require hospitalisation due to severe symptoms or complications. This can take place at home or in a designated facility for 10 days, for mild and asymptomatic cases.

WHO ARE CLOSE CONTACTS?

- Being within one metre of a Covid-19 case for more than 15 minutes
- Direct physical contact with a Covid-19 case
- Providing direct care for patients with Covid-19 disease without using proper personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Family members living together
- Direct caregivers or providers of medical treatment and care services
- Healthcare workers who perform diagnostic and treatment activities that emit aerosol
- Persons who have had close contact in an office, factory, workshop, elevator, canteen or cafeteria, classroom, or similar locations
- Persons sharing meals, entertaining, and providing catering and entertainment services in a closed environment
- Healthcare workers and family members visiting someone with Covid-19 or other people in close contact with Covid-19 cases
- Persons riding in a vehicle and within one metre of a Covid-19 case or an asymptomatic infected person including care-taking and nursing employees, companions (e.g. family

members, colleagues and friends), and other passengers and vehicles crew who might have contact through investigation and assessment

- Other persons assessed by onsite investigators meeting criteria for close contact

WHEN TO START AND END QUARANTINE

You should stay home for 10 days after your last contact with a person who has Covid-19.

For all of the following scenarios, even if you test negative for Covid-19 or feel healthy, you should stay home (quarantine) since symptoms may appear 2 to 14 days after exposure to the virus.

See scenarios below to determine when you can end quarantine and be around others.

Scenario 1: Close contact with someone who has Covid-19— will not have further close contact

I had close contact with someone who has Covid-19 and will not have further contact or interactions with the person while they are sick (e.g., co-worker, neighbour, or friend).

Your last day of quarantine is 10 days from the date you had close contact.

Date of last close contact with person who has Covid-19 + 10 days= end of quarantine (see calendar below).

| November | | | | | | | 2020 |
|----------|--------|--|-----------|----------|--|----------|------|
| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 Start of quarantine = last date of close contact with a person who has COVID-19 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
| 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 Last day of quarantine if there was no additional exposure | 14 | |
| 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | |
| 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | |
| 29 | 30 | | | | | | |

Scenario 2: Close contact with someone who has Covid-19— live with the person but can avoid further close contact

Acknowledgement: Center of Disease Control and Prevention, [National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases \(NCIRD\)](#), [Division of Viral Diseases](#)

I live with someone who has Covid-19 (e.g., roommate, partner, family member), and that person has isolated by staying in a separate bedroom. I have had no close contact with the person since they isolated.

Your last day of quarantine is 10 days from when the person with Covid-19 began home isolation.

Date person with Covid-19 began home isolation + 10 days = end of quarantine (see calendar below).

| November | | | | | | | 2020 |
|----------|--------|--|-----------|----------|--|----------|------|
| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 Start of quarantine = last date of close contact with a person who has COVID-19 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
| 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 Last day of quarantine if there was no additional exposure | 14 | |
| 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | |
| 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | |
| 29 | 30 | | | | | | |

Scenario 3. Under quarantine and had additional close contact with someone who has COVID-19

I live with someone who has COvid-19 and started my 10-day quarantine period because we had close contact. What if I ended up having close contact with another person who is sick during my quarantine? What if another household member gets sick with Covid-19? Do I need to restart my quarantine?

Yes. You will have to restart your quarantine from the last day you had close contact with anyone in your house (or from anywhere) who has Covid-19. **Any time a new household member gets sick with Covid-19 and you had close contact, you will need to restart your quarantine.**

Date of additional close contact with person who has Covid-19 + 10 days = end of quarantine (see calendar below).

November

2020

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--|--------|--|--|----------|--------|----------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 Start of quarantine = last date of close contact with a person who has COVID-19 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 8 Additional contact or someone got sick and you were exposed = restart of quarantine | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 Last day of quarantine if there was no additional exposure | 19 | 20 | 21 |
| 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 |
| 29 | 30 | | | | | |

Scenario 4: Live with someone who has Covid-19 and cannot avoid continued close contact

I live in a household where I cannot avoid close contact with the person who has Covid-19. I am providing direct care to the person who is sick, don't have a separate bedroom to isolate the person who is sick, or live in close quarters where I am unable to keep a physical distance of 1 metre.

You should avoid contact with others outside the home while the person is sick, and quarantine for 10 days after the person who has Covid-19 meets the criteria to end home isolation.

Date the person with Covid-19 ends home isolation + 10 days = end of quarantine (see calendar below).

November

2020

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--------|--|--------------------------------------|-----------|----------|---|----------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 Person is sick and has COVID-19 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 Criteria is met to end home isolation | 14 |
| 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 |
| 22 | 23 Last day of quarantine if there was no additional exposure | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 |
| 29 | 30 | | | | | |

References

1. World Health Organization. Contact tracing in the context of COVID-19. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2020. (<https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/332049> accessed 3 November 2020).
2. World Health Organization. Investigation of cases of human infection with MERS-CoV. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2020 (https://www.who.int/csr/disease/coronavirus_infections/mers-investigation-cases/en/ accessed 3 November 2020)
3. World Health Organization. Protocol to investigate non-seasonal influenza and other emerging acute respiratory diseases. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2020. (<https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/275657> accessed 3 November 2020)
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5. World Health Organization. Considerations in the investigation of cases and clusters of COVID-19. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2020. (<https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/332049> accessed 3 December 2020).
6. National Department of Health. National Guidelines on Contact Tracing for Covid-19. Pretoria: National Department of Health; 2020.
7. National Department of Health. Guidelines for Quarantine and Isolation in Relation to Covid-19 Exposure and Infection. Pretoria: National Department of Health; 2020.

National Department of Health (NDoH) continues to monitor the situation closely for any changes that may affect this interim guidance. Should any factors change, NDoH will issue a further update.

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