



Public Information Release

COVID-19 Update: Close Contact Quarantine

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Quarantine is used to keep someone who might have been exposed to COVID-19 away from others. Since a person can spread COVID-19 to other people up to two days before they have symptoms, quarantine helps prevent the spread of disease that can occur before a person knows they are sick. Madison County Public Health is responsible for talking with people who have COVID-19 and then speaking with those people who had contact with the positive case during the time they may have been spreading it to others.

You are considered a close contact of a case if you were within six feet of someone for at least fifteen minutes anytime during the two days before their symptoms started. You are also a close contact if you had any direct physical contact with a person (touched, hugged, or kissed them) or if you remember the person sneezing or coughing on you.

All close contacts of an infected individual are required to remain quarantined in their place of residence for two weeks following their most recent exposure to the person who tested positive. People who are quarantined cannot go to work and may only leave their residence to seek medical care.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines explain that even if a close contact tests negative for COVID-19 or feels healthy, they are to stay home (quarantine) since symptoms may appear two to fourteen days after exposure to the virus. "We've had a few people go and get tested a few days into their quarantine, get a negative result, and then think they can return to their usual routine. That isn't the way it works," explained Health Commissioner Chris Cook. "Even if you get a negative test result during your two-week quarantine you have to finish out the entire fourteen days."

While close contacts are under quarantine they are also asked to maintain social distance from those in their household, including using separate bedrooms and bathrooms when possible. It is also critical that they avoid all contact with people at higher risk for severe illness including older adults and individuals of any age who have underlying medical conditions as they are the most at risk for complications from the virus.

During quarantine, Madison County Public Health nurses are available to answer questions and provide instructions on how to monitor for symptoms and when to speak to a doctor. They also provide steps to take before having any interaction with others.

All residents are strongly encouraged to wear a face covering in addition to hand washing and social distancing. "Reducing disease spread requires two things: limit contacts of infected individuals and reduce the chances of transmission," Cook said. "The best way to accomplish this is to isolate cases, quarantine exposed people, limit large gatherings, and wear masks while social distancing."

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