

## **Contact Tracing Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What is contact tracing in Colorado?**

Contact tracing is identifying people who have had close contact with a person who has COVID-19. Once contacts are identified by the person who has COVID-19, Tri-County Health Department (TCHD) reaches out to them to see if they have any symptoms, provide information on what to do if they do get symptoms, and to provide guidance and support during self-quarantine or isolation. TCHD has done case contact tracing for years for diseases like foodborne illness, measles and tuberculosis.

### **Why does public health do contact tracing?**

Contact tracing can effectively break the chain of disease transmission and prevent further spread of the virus in a community. When contacts are quickly identified and quarantined, they are less likely to transmit COVID-19 to others if they become sick. This also helps us to identify new people who are sick with COVID-19 to provide isolation guidance to those that would otherwise not be identified.

### **What is self-quarantine?**

[Self-quarantine](#) is when you stay away from others in case symptoms begin at any point. It also includes monitoring for symptoms. Self-quarantine should last for 14 days from the last known contact with a person known to have COVID-19.

### **What is isolation?**

[Isolation](#) is when a sick person stays home while they are experiencing symptoms. During isolation, you should stay away from others as much as possible. It is a good idea to try to have someone drop-off supplies, including groceries off at your house. Isolation is for at least 10 days after symptoms onset, *plus* at least 3 days without fever without the use of fever-reducing medication, and at least 3 days of improving symptoms.

### **How does TCHD know who to call to do contact tracing?**

TCHD receives positive COVID-19 test results from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE). These results can be from people who go to their healthcare provider, urgent care, the emergency room, or one of the many community-testing sites throughout the state of Colorado. Once TCHD receives the positive test result, our team does a case investigation. Part of the case investigation asks who the reported person had close contact with during the time that they were infectious with COVID-19. That is how we determine who to notify as part of contact tracing.

### **Will TCHD tell my contacts that I was the one who might have gotten them sick?**

We do not share with contacts where or who they came in contact with to expose them. We do encourage people with COVID-19 to notify their close contacts and to inform them that the health department will try to contact them.

### **What kind of questions does TCHD ask during a case investigation or contact tracing?**

TCHD may ask for the following information:

- Name and date of birth, to confirm identity
- Address
- Email address
- Gender
- Race & ethnicity
- Symptoms
- Course of COVID-19 illness (hospitalization, mechanical ventilation, etc.)
- Basic health history
- Your occupation and place of employment
- Your activities during your exposure period (14 days before your symptoms started or before your specimen was collected for testing)
- Your activities during your “infectious period” (2 days prior to symptom onset through 10 days after symptom onset)
- Names and phone numbers of people you were in close contact with during your “infectious period”, including household members

### **TCHD will NOT ask for:**

- Your Social Security Number
- Your credit card or financial information
- Residency or immigration status (unless needed to verify eligibility for requested community support resources)

### **Is testing mandatory if you have been contacted by a contact tracer?**

No. In the setting of an outbreak or a high risk profession, like health care, jails, or shelters, the health department can require individuals with symptoms to be excluded from work or isolated in residence and may require testing to allow them to return to work or be removed from isolation.

### **How does TCHD determine who is a “contact” of a person with COVID-19?**

TCHD will only call close contacts to a person who has tested positive for COVID-19. Close contact is defined as within 6-feet of the person for more than 15 minutes. That means that if the person went shopping while they were sick, TCHD will not call everyone who was in the store while that person was shopping.

### **How will our phones or technology be involved? Will our movements be tracked?**

The health department will use your phone number only to call you directly to let you know if you have been exposed to the virus during case investigations. Your phone number is not shared and is considered personal health information and protected by

HIPAA privacy laws. Your phone number is not used for location tracking purposes. If continued communication is needed, contact tracers will use your preferred contact method that you provide.

### **What happens if someone refuses participation in contact tracing for themselves or a child?**

Participation in case investigation and contact tracing is voluntary in most circumstances, although it is highly encouraged. Contact tracing may be required by a public health order in high-risk situations, such as a person intentionally exposing others, or someone who worked while infectious in a high risk setting like a Long-Term Care Facility.

### **Can I be re-infected with COVID?**

As COVID-19 continues to circulate, individuals who have previously tested positive for COVID-19 may be re-exposed to the virus. Many questions about immunity after infection remain, and scientific studies are underway to determine whether someone who had infection before can get it again (called re-infection). Check with your healthcare provider if you think you have been re-exposed.

### **What should I do after my quarantine period ends?**

After the self-quarantining period has ended or you have recovered from any COVID-19 symptoms, you should continue to [protect yourself and others](#) by wearing a face covering, staying 6-feet away from others, and washing your hands with soap and water regularly.

### **Is contact tracing mandated by law?**

Colorado statute gives local public health agencies authority “to investigate and control the causes of epidemic diseases and conditions” and also to establish, maintain, and enforce quarantine and isolation to protect the public health. However, TCHD seeks voluntary quarantine and isolation compliance whenever possible. Public health agencies have used contact tracing to contain other viruses and disease outbreaks.

### **Where do I apply to be a contact tracer?**

Please visit our [careers website](#) to apply to be a contact tracer.

### **What if I am quarantined and don't have access to resources?**

Your contact tracer can connect you with our Community Services Branch who can provide you with [support resources](#).



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**I got a text message from someone saying they are a contact tracer, is that real?**

CDPHE and local public health agencies will distribute a survey using a text message with a link to a secure form to support contact tracing. The survey will never ask recipients to provide their social security number or any information related to their banking or finances. It will come from the number 31096.

**What number is TCHD calling from?**

A call from TCHD will either be from a 720 number or come up as TRICOUNTYHEALTH on your caller ID. However, if TCHD is calling a cell phone, the phone carrier will usually display only the city, state, and number instead of caller ID and there is no way to force the device on the recipient's end to display the caller ID.