



Health Alert Network

Tri-County Health Department

Serving Adams, Arapahoe and Douglas Counties

Phone 303/220-9200 • Fax 303/741-4173 • www.tchd.org

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John M. Douglas, Jr., M.D. Executive Director

The pages that follow contain information critical to protecting the health of your patients and the citizens of Colorado.

HAN UPDATE

Number of pages including cover: 6

Subject: **Update - Information for Patients about COVID-19 Isolation and Quarantine, Testing, and Contact Tracing - July 17, 2020**

Message ID: 7/17/2020 10:30:00 AM

Recipients: HAN Community Members.

From: TRI-COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Adams, Arapahoe and Douglas County, Colorado

Recipient Instructions: **Health care providers: Please distribute widely in your office. For your information. No response required.**

For more information:

- TCHD COVID-19 web page: <http://www.tchd.org/818/Coronavirus-COVID-19>
- CDPHE COVID-19 web page: <https://covid19.colorado.gov/>
- CDC COVID-19 web page: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- Medical resource requests/questions may be submitted to Logistics@tchd.org. TCHD Logistics will provide the ordering resource document (213RR) and direct partners to the corresponding County or City OEM Logistics personnel to place your orders into the State ordering system, Web EOC.
- For questions about COVID-19 please call Tri-County Health Department at 303-220-9200.
- Members of the public may contact CO Help at 303-389-1687 or 1-877-462-2911 with general questions about COVID-19 to receive answers in many languages including English, Spanish (Español), Mandarin (普通话), and more, or email COHELP@RMPDC.org (for answers in English only).

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Categories of Health Alert Network Messages:

Health Alert: Conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: Provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

Health Update: Provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

Info Service/Public Health Brief: Provides general information that is not necessarily considered to be of an emergent nature.

You may download a copy of this HAN from the TCHD website at
<http://www.tchd.org/259/Health-Alert-Network>



HEALTH LEVEL - UPDATE

Information for Patients about COVID-19 Isolation and Quarantine, Testing, and Contact Tracing
July 17, 2020

*****Health care providers: Please distribute widely in your office*****

KEY POINTS:

- Isolation and quarantine guidance are presented to help providers answer questions from patients diagnosed with COVID-19 and to help explain the process for contact tracing.
- Symptomatic close contacts should undergo COVID-19 PCR testing.
- Asymptomatic close contacts can be offered (PCR) testing approximately 7 days into their quarantine period. The purpose of testing asymptomatic close contacts is to identify positives. Persons with asymptomatic infection still spread SARS-CoV-2 to others, and those testing positive should be placed in isolation.
- Inform patients who test PCR positive that their local public health department will call them to perform a disease investigation to identify possible exposures, ask for a list of people the case had close contact with while they were infectious, and provide education on isolation and quarantine of close contacts. The local public health department will also attempt to do contact tracing to help slow the spread of COVID-19 and direct close contacts to self-quarantine away from others.
- Retesting of someone who previously tested (PCR) positive is not recommended for the general public because of high potential for persistently positive tests which can unnecessarily prolong the isolation period. There are some settings where repeat testing might be indicated such as long-term care facilities, healthcare settings, or correctional settings.
- Tri-County Health Department recommends using CDC's symptom-based or time-based strategy (rather than a test-based strategy) when providing guidance to cases on when they can return to work.
- Links to print and online COVID-19 patient education materials are available to give patients.

BACKGROUND:

Tri-County Health Department (TCHD) is requesting assistance from all health care providers to educate patients regarding COVID-19 disease control measures. TCHD conducts COVID-19 investigations 7-days a week and needs providers to reinforce messaging we share with cases and close contacts about isolation, quarantine, and testing. Print and online COVID-19 patient education materials are available to give patients at the time of testing.

RECOMMENDATIONS & GUIDANCE TO SHARE WITH PATIENTS WHO ARE DIAGNOSED WITH COVID-19 OR IDENTIFIED AS A CLOSE CONTACT:

Isolation

Isolation is separating sick individuals with COVID-19 from individuals who are not sick. A person who tests positive for COVID-19 by PCR (confirmed case) or is suspected of having COVID-19 based on symptoms alone (probable case) should be placed in isolation. Someone in isolation should stay home and away from others, including not going to work in an offsite location.

TCHD recommends using one of these two strategies to determine when someone with COVID-19 can come out of isolation:

Symptom-based

For persons with COVID-19 who had symptoms and tested positive OR only had COVID-19 symptoms — Isolation may be discontinued when:

- No fever for at least 3 days without using fever-reducing medication, AND
- Improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath) for at least 3 days, AND
- At least 10 days have passed since their symptoms first appeared. If after 10 days, fever is still present OR respiratory symptoms are not better, then the individual should stay home until those symptoms have improved for at least 3 days.

Time-based

For persons who tested positive for COVID-19 but never had symptoms — Isolation may be discontinued when:

- 10 days have passed since the specimen collection date, provided no symptoms developed since their positive test. If they developed symptoms, then the symptom-based strategy should be used.

Quarantine

Quarantine is for individuals who were in close contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case but remain asymptomatic. Someone in quarantine should stay at home and keep a safe distance from others in case symptoms begin at any point within the 14-day quarantine period — or if asymptomatic infection occurs.

During quarantine an individual should take their temperature once or twice a day to be sure they do not have a fever (greater than 100.4°F) and watch for symptoms of COVID-19, including a new — fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, body aches, fatigue, loss of taste or smell, congestion, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea. It might take days for the full spectrum of symptoms to develop and some infected individuals might only have mild symptoms.

Close contacts of persons with confirmed or probable COVID-19 should self-quarantine for 14 days from the time of their last contact with the person.

What counts as close contact?

- You were within 6 feet of someone who has COVID-19 for at least 15 minutes
- You provided care at home to someone who is sick with COVID-19
- You had direct physical contact with the person (touched, hugged, or kissed them)
- You shared eating or drinking utensils
- They sneezed, coughed, or somehow got respiratory droplets on you

COVID-19 isolation and quarantine handouts for patients can be found here:

<https://www.tchd.org/840/Isolation-and-Home-Care>.

Testing close contacts

If an individual has been in close contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19, it is advisable for them to get tested even if they don't have symptoms since some infected individuals remain asymptomatic. Close contacts who are healthcare workers, first responders, or work at a facility with an outbreak should be tested.

Use a molecular amplification test (i.e., PCR) to diagnose COVID-19.

- A close contact who develops symptoms suggestive of COVID-19 during the 14-day quarantine period should be tested and be placed in isolation.

- Close contacts who are asymptomatic can be tested about 7 days into their quarantine period and if negative, consider testing again at 14 days when quarantine ends.

*** The purpose of testing asymptomatic close contacts is to identify positives. Persons with asymptomatic infection still spread SARS-CoV-2 to others. Persons who test positive should be placed in isolation just the same as someone who has symptoms and follow the isolation guidance above.

*** Close contacts who test negative must remain in quarantine. A negative test does not end the quarantine period early since someone could turn positive or develop symptoms at any point during quarantine.

Reporting test results to patients

Provide test results to all patients that you test as soon as you receive them and instruct the patient to take isolation precautions. Inform patients who test PCR positive that their local public health department will call them to perform a disease investigation interview to enhance our ability to control community transmission. The interviewer will try to identify possible exposures, ask for a list of the people the case had close contact with while they were infectious, and provide education on isolation and quarantine of close contacts; all information is kept confidential and shared only with other public health staff. Participation in these interviews is voluntary but extremely important for helping to curb transmission

Contact Tracing

Contact tracing is conducted by public health staff to identify individuals who might have been exposed to someone known or suspected of having COVID-19. Close contacts are at risk of getting infected themselves. Contact tracing is a critical tool to help to slow the spread of COVID-19 by having close contacts self-quarantine away from others.

Supporting Individuals in isolation or quarantine

Individuals who are contacted by public health about a positive test or potential exposure to COVID-19 should be reassured that their information is kept confidential. Information you can share with patients about the contract tracing process can be found at <https://covid19.colorado.gov/prevent-the-spread-of-covid-19/contact-tracing> and <https://www.tchd.org/842/Contact-Tracing>.

TCHD will also assist with linking anyone who must be in isolation or quarantine with community services if there are needs with housing, transportation, finances, or other issues. A list of community resources for Adams, Arapahoe and Douglas Counties that you can share with your patients is available at: http://www.tchd.org/DocumentCenter/View/7318/Community-Resource-Listing-6_29-span-incl.

Repeat testing after someone tests PCR positive:

Retesting of someone who previously tested PCR positive is **not** recommended for the general public. Decisions about duration of isolation should be made based on either symptom onset or test date, as defined in this document.

There are some settings where repeat testing might be indicated such as long-term care facilities, healthcare settings, or correctional settings. Note that insurance might not cover the cost of repeat testing.

Return to work strategies for patients who had COVID-19:

There are three strategies used to determine when a person with COVID-19 is ready to return to work (outside of their home) after being in isolation: *Symptom-based, Time-based, or Test-based.*

Symptom-based

For persons with COVID-19 who had symptoms and tested positive OR only had COVID-19 symptoms — Isolation may be discontinued when:

- No fever for at least 3 days without using fever-reducing medication, AND
- Improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath) for at least 3 days, AND
- At least 10 days have passed since their symptoms first appeared. If after 10 days, fever is still present OR respiratory symptoms are not better, then the individual should stay home until those symptoms have improved for at least 3 days.

Time-based

For persons who tested positive for COVID-19 but never had symptoms — Isolation may be discontinued when:

- 10 days have passed since the specimen collection date, provided no symptoms developed since their positive test. If they developed symptoms, then the symptom-based strategy should be used.

Test-based

For persons with COVID-19 who had symptoms and tested positive — Isolation may be discontinued when:

- No fever without using fever-reducing medication, AND
- Improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath), AND
- Two consecutive negative PCR tests taken at least 24 hours apart.

For persons who tested positive for COVID-19 but never had symptoms — Isolation may be discontinued when:

- Two consecutive negative PCR tests taken at least 24 hours apart.

The decision of which strategy is used is ultimately up to an employer, as TCHD does not provide individual clearance for return to work. Although some employers may pursue a test-based strategy, repeat testing is contingent on testing being available and accessible in a particular area as well as cost (on average, COVID-19 tests cost \$100-200 when not covered by insurance). **Furthermore, because PCR tests can remain positive long after a person is no longer infectious, TCHD does not recommend requiring a proof of a negative test prior to returning to the workplace after documented COVID-19 infection. Instead, TCHD advises using either the symptom-based or time-based strategy when providing guidance to patients on when they can return to work.**

Reminder:

COVID-19 is a reportable condition by laboratories and medical providers to the health department. If you are performing testing in your practice, please ensure both positive and negative test results are being reported to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE)

[https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/report-a-disease.](https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/report-a-disease)

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Patient education materials:

- Isolation and Quarantine: <https://www.tchd.org/DocumentCenter/View/6994/TCHD-Isolation-and-Quarantine-COVID-19-Fact-Sheet>
- Contact Tracing (TCHD): <https://www.tchd.org/DocumentCenter/View/7307/vertical-contact-tracing618>
- Contact Tracing (TCHD Info graphic): <https://www.tchd.org/842/Contact-Tracing>.
- Contact Tracing (CDPHE): <https://covid19.colorado.gov/prevent-the-spread-of-covid-19/contact-tracing>
- Community resources for Adams, Arapahoe and Douglas Counties: http://www.tchd.org/DocumentCenter/View/7318/Community-Resource-Listing-6_29-span-incl.

Information about insurance billing for COVID-19 testing

- National guidance and resources from the American Medical Association: <https://www.ama-assn.org/practice-management/cpt/covid-19-coding-and-guidance>
- National guidance and resources from the Health Resources and Services Administration for testing and treatment of the uninsured: <https://www.hrsa.gov/coviduninsuredclaim/frequently-asked-questions>
- State guidance and resources from the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Finance, directed at Health First Colorado and CHP+ Providers: <https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/hcpf/covid-19-provider-information>
- Regional guidance from Colorado Access, directed at Health First Colorado Providers in Adams, Arapahoe and Douglas counties: <https://www.coaccess.com/providers/resources/>

General resources:

- Tri-County Health Department: <http://www.tchd.org/>
- COVID-19 has had a disproportionate impact on communities of color and other marginalized groups. Part of this is due to barriers to testing. In an effort to overcome those barriers, CDPHE has put together [COVID-19 equitable testing guidance](#) for testing sites.
- CDC quarantine guidance: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine.html>
- CDC guidance on Discontinuing Home Isolation: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/disposition-in-home-patients.html>