

# COVID-19 Definition of Terms

**Case:** A person who has tested positive for COVID-19.

**Case investigation:** The steps taken by a trained health worker when calling a person who tests positive for COVID-19 to ask about their symptoms, how they may have been infected, and who they may have infected. This step may be done by the Montgomery County Office of Public Health, but may be initiated by the school nurse.

**Close contact/close contact exposure:** A close contact is ANY person who lives with someone who tests positive for COVID-19 or who has spent a total of 15 consecutive minutes within about 6 feet of anyone who has COVID-19.

Additional factors that should be considered when assessing close contacts include:

- Being in extremely close proximity (e.g., face to face).
- The infected person exhibiting symptoms.
- The infected person generating respiratory aerosols (e.g., coughing, singing, shouting).

**Community spread:** Community spread means that people in the community are infected with the virus and spreading it to others, who may not know how or where they got infected.

**Contact tracing:** Talking with people who are infected with COVID-19 to learn who had close contact with them and then telling close contacts they may have been infected. Contact tracing can be a key element in stopping or limiting the spread of disease.

**Exposed:** This means coming in contact with the virus. The virus is thought to spread when someone who is infected coughs, sneezes, or exhales.

**Incubation period:** This is the time from close contact with the virus to development of infection. For COVID-19, this period ranges from two to 14 days.

**Infectious period:** This is the period of time a person with COVID-19 can spread the virus to others. It includes the two days before a person has symptoms, and 10 days after symptoms start. For a person without symptoms, the infectious period is two days before the date the person tests positive for COVID-19 and 10 days after.

**Isolation:** Isolation is when a person who tests positive for COVID-19 stays at home and away from others, even those living in the same home. This prevents them from spreading the disease to others. The isolation period for COVID-19 is 5 days from the start of symptoms, or from the test date if the person has no symptoms, and until 24 hours without fever, without using medicine that reduces fever, and until symptoms have improved. The period could be longer if a person's symptoms do not improve.

**Quarantine:** Quarantine is when a person who is a close contact of someone with COVID-19 stays at home and away from others to see if they will develop COVID-19. This prevents someone who does not yet know if they have the disease from spreading it to others if it turns out they have it. Please refer to the [Montgomery County School Exclusion Guidelines](#) or contact the school nurse to determine whether or not you need to quarantine as well as additional preventative measures.

**Transmission:** This is the term used to describe when an illness spreads between people

