



COVID-19: Isolation vs. Quarantine

What is Isolation?

If you test positive for COVID-19, or have COVID-19 like symptoms, you will be asked to *isolate*. Isolation is a health care term that means keeping individuals who are infected with a contagious illness away from those who are not infected. Isolation can take place at home or at a hospital or care facility. The Montgomery County Office of Public Health (MCOPH) recommends isolation for 10 days for the onset of symptoms, fever free for 2 hours and improved symptoms or 10 days from the date of the positive test if an individual is not having symptoms.

What is Quarantine?

Individuals who have been exposed to the new coronavirus and who are at risk for coming down with COVID-19 should practice self-quarantine. The MCOPH recommends that self-quarantine lasts 14 days from the date of last exposure. Staying away from people for 14 days provides enough time for them to know whether or not they will become ill and be contagious to other people.

Steps for Isolation/Quarantine:

Stay home, except to get medical care.

- Monitor your symptoms: Fever, cough, shortness of breath.

Seek prompt medical attention if you become ill or symptoms get worse.

Restrict activities outside your home, except for getting medical care.

- Do not go to work, school, or public areas. Avoid using public transportation, ride-sharing, or taxis.
- Do not allow visitors into your home.

Separate yourself from other people and animals in your home.

- People: As much as possible, you should stay in a specific room and away from other people in your home.
- You should use a separate bathroom, if available.
- It is very important to stay away from people who are at higher risk of serious illness. This includes Individuals who are age 65 years and older, pregnant, or have a health problem such as a diabetes, high blood pressure, chronic disease or a weak immune

- system. Consider different living arrangements for these high-risk Individuals if possible.
- Avoid caring for children if possible.
 - Animals: Although there have not been reports of pets or other animals becoming sick with COVID-19, it is still recommended that Individuals sick with COVID-19 limit contact with animals until more information is known about the virus. When possible, have another member of your household care for your animals.

Wear a cloth face covering if you must go around others in the home.

Cough or sneeze into the fold of your elbow. Alternatively, cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.

Clean your hands often.

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains 60-95% alcohol, covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry. Soap and water should be used preferentially if hands are visibly dirty.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

Clean all “high-touch” surfaces every day.

- High touch surfaces include counters, tabletops, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, toilets, phones, keyboards, tablets, and bedside tables. Also, clean any surfaces that may have blood, stool, or body fluids on them.
- Use a household cleaning spray or wipe, according to the label instructions. Labels contain instructions for safe and effective use of the cleaning product including precautions you should take when applying the product, such as wearing gloves and making sure you have good ventilation during use of the product.

Do not prepare or serve food to others.

Avoid sharing household items.

If you have a medical emergency and need to call 911, notify the dispatch personnel that you have, or are being evaluated for COVID-19.

If you have any questions, please contact the Montgomery County Office of Public Health at

610-278-5117 or email Covid19@montcopa.org.