**Common Questions from COVID-19 Positive Individuals and their Close Contacts:**

**Q: How long should I stay home and isolate following a positive result?**

**A:** Your isolation period is 10 days total. This is a state public health regulation, enforceable by your local Board of Health. Please visit <https://isol8.mass.gov> for more specific instructions on how to isolate at home.

**Q: How is the 10-day isolation period calculated?**

**A:** Day 0 is the first day your symptoms began, or your positive test date, whichever came first. Starting on that date, count forward 10 days. Day 11 is the day you can return to work, school etc. If you still feel quite sick on Day 11, stay home until you feel well enough to work.

**Q: Could I still be infectious after 10 days?**

**A:** It is rare for someone to still be infectious after 10 days of COVID, and this typically occurs when someone in the hospital with severe symptoms.

**Q: I am nearing the end of my isolation period. Should I retest before I go back to work?**

**A:** No. The outcome of a new test 10 days after your first positive result will not indicate whether you are still infectious. It will only reflect whether you still have bits of the virus in your system that are detectable by the lab. Per the CDC, employers should not request a negative test for staff to return unless it is a special circumstance, such as an essential healthcare worker being asked to return to work early.

**Q: I tested positive for COVID. Who are my close contacts?**

**A:** Your infectious period most likely began 48 hours before your first symptom started. If you have no symptoms, you became infectious 48 hours before you tested positive. Anyone who is not fully vaccinated or recovered from COVID in the past 90 days AND was indoors within 6 ft of you for a total of 15 minutes - going back those 48 hours and leading up to the time you began to isolate, is considered a close contact.

**Q: I was identified as a close contact of someone with COVID but we both wore masks the entire time. Do I still need to quarantine?**

**A:** Yes, if you are not fully vaccinated (if your 2nd Pfizer/Moderna or your J&J shot was less than 14 days ago). While masking is very helpful in reducing transmission, state regulations still require close contacts to quarantine even if masked during their exposure.

**Q: How is it that schools don't classify it as a close contact if the staff and kids were wearing masks?**

**A:** Schools follow joint Dept. of Ed. and Dept. of Public Health regulations, which advise a number of mitigation strategies be used, including improved HVAC systems, 3-6 ft spacing as much as possible, windows open on buses, and universal masking except at lunchtime. For that reason, masked close contacts from school or bus exposures are not required to quarantine in the same way the general public is. This exception does not apply to other settings, including daycares, youth sports or other programs.

**Q: How do I know if I'm fully vaccinated?**

**A:** If it is more than 14 days after your J&J shot or your second Pfizer or Moderna shot, you are considered fully vaccinated.

**Q: I'm not fully vaccinated but had COVID already. Do I still need to quarantine after being exposed?**

**A:** Yes, if the close contact definition (indoors within 6 ft for 15 min or more) is met AND you recovered from COVID more than 90 days ago. This is because the amount of natural immunity protection and length of time it lasts, varies quite a bit among individuals. If you were exposed less than 90 days after recovering from COVID infection, you do not need to quarantine.

**Q: What do close contacts need to do?**

**A:** Per state regulation, close contacts must stay home in quarantine IF they are not already fully vaccinated or recovered from COVID in the past 90 days. Please visit <https://isol8.mass.gov> for more information on how to quarantine at home. There are 3 possible timeframes for quarantine, ranging from 7 to 14 days. See below.

**Q: How long do I need to quarantine?**

**A:** Day 0 is the last day you were exposed to the infectious person. Count forward to Day 5 and get tested on that day or later (PCR or rapid at a testing site, a home test does not count in this case).

1) If result is negative and you have not developed any symptoms, you may return to work, school, etc. on Day 8.

2) If you do not get tested and have no symptoms, you must stay home a bit longer and can come out on Day 11.

3) If you develop any symptoms during the 14 days following exposure, you need to get a PCR test. Even if the result is negative, you must stay home a full 14 days, coming out on Day 15 (this is to account for a possible false negative result). If the result is positive, you'll follow the isolation guidance, explained above.

Some employers may require a full 14 day quarantine and/or negative test to return to work after an exposure, if the work environment has a high risk for transmission or the population being served is medically compromised.

**Q: I am a close contact and must quarantine.  Do I need to wear a mask at home and keep away from others in my household? Do they need to stay home also?**

A: Household members of a person in quarantine do not need to stay home. This may change if the quarantining person becomes symptomatic or tests positive. The level of precaution everyone takes at home will depend on whether they are vaccinated and/or boosted, have underlying medical conditions, or work with high risk individuals.

**Q: I live with someone who is infectious with COVID. What should we do?**

**A:** To reduce the chance of spread, the infectious person should isolate in a separate room from others and wear a mask when they briefly come into common spaces. Normal handwashing and cleaning is sufficient, there is no need to sanitize surfaces, wear gloves or take other extraordinary measures. Infection from surface contact has been found to be extremely rare. Ventilating shared spaces by cracking windows and running fans, plus mask wearing, are your best line of defense.

Household members who are fully vaccinated or recovered from COVID in the past 90 days are not required to quarantine but are advised to mask and social distance in public indoor spaces for the next few weeks. They should get tested if any new symptoms appear. If vaccinated but not boosted, they may wish to get tested anyway, for good measure - immunity may have waned after 5-6 months.

Household members not fully vaccinated or recovered from COVID in the past 90 days must quarantine as described above. They will need to determine their last date of close contact. Depending the sick person's ability to truly isolate within the home, the last date of close contact may have already occurred.

In families with small children who are infected and parents or siblings are not fully vaccinated,  the last date of close contact is usually the last day the sick person is still infectious. Unvaccinated family members stay home through that date, then remain at home for another 7 days, getting tested on Day 5 or later. This often means the person isolating with COVID returns to work or school a week before other quarantining household members. Given the high infectiousness of COVID, unvaxxed household members may wish to test (once or maybe even twice, a few days later) while the sick person is still isolating at home, to determine their own COVID status as early as possible.

**Q: I am isolating at home and now another household member has tested positive.  Can we isolate together?**

**A:** Yes. While actively sick with COVID (even if no symptoms), you cannot be reinfected. Also, as explained above, the natural immunity you develop is expected to protect you against future reinfection for at least 90 days following recovery.

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Vaccine Appointment Finder:

http://vaxfinder.mass.gov

Dial 2-1-1 for homebound appts or difficulty using internet

COVID-19 MA Dept. of Public Health and CDC Guidance:

COVID-19 booster frequently asked questions | Mass.gov

COVID-19 isolation and quarantine information | Mass.gov

When You’ve Been Fully Vaccinated | CDC

Delta Variant: What We Know About the Science | CDC