



Guidance on Quarantine Duration for Close Contacts of COVID-19 Cases

December 18, 2020

New Recommendations

SFDPH has updated its guidance on quarantine duration for close contacts of COVID-19 cases to align with recent changes by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the California Department of Public Health (CDPH). The CDC and CDPH still recommend a quarantine period of 14 days after COVID-19 exposure as the most health protective duration to limit the spread of COVID-19. SFDPH, like CDC and CDPH, recognizes the long duration of quarantine creates economic and personal hardship, impacts people's compliance with quarantine, and may impact the willingness of cases to name close contacts. Thus the following quarantine duration is an acceptable alternative:

- **Most people who have had close contact with someone with COVID-19 may end their quarantine after day 10 if they do not develop symptoms during this time. SFDPH strongly recommends that close contacts without symptoms get tested on or after day 6 of quarantine.** Because there is a small chance that close contacts may still be infected, they should continue to wear a face mask and stay at least 6 feet away from others until day 14.
 - Day 0 of quarantine is the day of the last close contact with the person with COVID-19.
 - Tests should be a COVID-19 nucleic acid amplification test (e.g. PCR or LAMP).
 - Close contacts should self-monitor for COVID-19 symptoms through day 14. If they have symptoms at any point during their quarantine, they should get tested immediately, even if they tested negative earlier during their quarantine.
 - People who develop symptoms or test positive will need to follow self-isolation guidelines at www.sfdcp.org/I&Q.
- Given the higher risk and impact of transmission in high risk congregate living settings, **people who live in long term care facilities (including SNFs and RCFEs), correctional facilities, shelters, or dormitories must quarantine for 14 days** after their last close contact with a person with COVID-19.
- **People who work in long term care facilities (including SNFs and RCFEs), correctional facilities, shelters, or dormitories, or those who work with people who are severely immunocompromised** (e.g. bone marrow or solid organ transplants, receiving chemotherapy) **may end home-quarantine 10 days after their last close contact with someone with COVID-19, if they do not develop symptoms, but they cannot return to work for 14 days**, unless they are Essential COVID-19 Response Workers during times of staffing shortage, as below.

Exceptions for “Essential COVID-19 Response Workers”

Essential COVID-19 Response Workers may return sooner than the recommendations above during staffing shortages when deemed appropriate by their employers. In San Francisco, Essential COVID-19 Response Workers include: healthcare workers, laboratory personnel handling COVID-19 specimens, morgue workers, first responders, law enforcement, sanitation workers, 911 and 311 operators,

emergency management personnel, and individuals assigned to work as Disaster Service Workers. See [Health Directive 2020-02c](#) for more information.

- If staff are asked to shorten their quarantine duration due to staffing shortages, staff must continue to mask and monitor symptoms daily for 14 days, immediately report symptoms to their supervisor, and stop working if they become symptomatic. Additional PPE or staff cohorting may be required by employers.
- More information on addressing critical staffing shortages is found at the [CDC's Strategies to Mitigate Healthcare Personnel Staffing Shortages](#) and the [CDC's Critical Infrastructure Sector Response Planning](#)
 - One option to consider for shorter quarantine duration for Essential COVID-19 Response Workers during critical staffing shortages is to allow employees who are close contacts of COVID-19 cases to return **after day 7 if they are asymptomatic and have a negative test collected on or after day 5.**

Additional Exception

In accordance with CDPH guidance, during staffing shortages, social service workers who work face to face with clients in the child welfare system or in assisted living facilities who have had close contact with a person with COVID-19 may consider shortening the quarantine duration to **7 days if close contacts remain asymptomatic and have a negative test collected on or after day 5.**

- If staff are asked to shorten their quarantine duration due to staffing shortages, staff must continue to mask and monitor symptoms daily for 14 days, immediately report symptoms to their supervisor, and stop working if they become symptomatic. Additional PPE or staff cohorting may be required by employers.

Background and Rationale

San Francisco requires that people quarantine at home after close contact with someone with COVID-19, per Health Directive 2020-02b. Quarantine is used to keep someone *who has been exposed to COVID-19 and might be infected* away from others. People in quarantine must stay home and separate themselves from others. Quarantine helps prevent spread of disease before a person knows they are sick or if they are infected. Because most COVID-19 infections are caused by people with no symptoms, quarantining people who have been exposed to COVID-19 is essential to stop the spread of COVID-19.

When the COVID-19 epidemic started, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommended quarantining for 14 days. This is because it can take up to 14 days for people to become contagious after being exposed. However, we now know that if people do not develop symptoms for the first 10 days, the chance of them being infected and spreading the infection to other people is probably only 1-2%.

Balancing the burdens of quarantine with the need to prevent spread of COVID-19, CDC recently gave local public health departments two shorter options for quarantine. CDPH subsequently changed state recommendations for quarantine based on this information from the CDC.

The recommendations maintain stricter guidelines for those who live or work in higher risk congregate environments such as nursing homes and correctional facilities given the catastrophic impact of outbreaks in these settings. The recommendations also include shorter quarantine options for healthcare and emergency workers during staffing shortages, which is important to ensure healthcare workers and emergency responders are available to work during surges.

Resources

San Francisco Department of Public Health

- Guidance on Isolation and Quarantine: www.sfdcp.org/i&q

California Department of Public Health (CDPH)

- COVID-19 Quarantine Guidance. Dec. 14, 2020
<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/COVID-19-Quarantine.aspx>

Centers for Disease Control (CDC)

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine.html>
- Options to Reduce Quarantine for Contacts of Persons with SARS-CoV-2 Infection Using Symptom Monitoring and Diagnostic Testing. December 2, 2020.
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/more/scientific-brief-options-to-reduce-quarantine.html>