Home Quarantine Instructions

What to do if your child was exposed to COVID-19 and wasn’t fully vaccinated to COVID-19

If your child had close contact with someone who has COVID-19, they may be infected. They could spread the infection to others, even before they have symptoms or test positive.

Here’s what you need to do:

1. Keep your child at home and away from others.
   - Your child must stay at home, except to get tested or get medical care. Try to keep them away from other people in your home. See Protect others in your home.
   - Do not let visitors inside your home, unless you need help taking care of someone at home.
   - If your child leaves home to get tested or get medical care, avoid public transportation, taxis, or ride-shares (Lyft, Uber) if possible. For more information, see www.sfcdcp.org/safertransit.
   - Call the COVID Resource Center at (628) 217-6101 and leave a message if your child cannot quarantine where you live, or if you need food or other resources to keep your child at home. Information about resources can also be found at COVID Resource Center.
   - If your child had close contact at school and is being allowed to attend school, see below modified quarantine.

2. Have your child tested for COVID-19
   - Consider getting your child tested for COVID-19 as soon as possible in case they are already infected and not yet showing symptoms. At minimum, make an appointment to have your child tested on or after 5 days after their last close contact.
   - Have your child tested right away if they develop symptoms at any point during their quarantine, even if they tested negative earlier during quarantine.

Keep your child at home until the end of their quarantine. They cannot return to regular activities until their quarantine ends, even if they test negative before then. They could still be infected. People can test negative early in their infection, and symptoms can take time to appear.
3. **Answer phone calls from (916) 262-7553.**  
   This is a health worker from the San Francisco Department of Public Health calling because your child was exposed to COVID-19. They can answer questions about COVID-19 and quarantine, help you get a test for your child, and help you get food, housing, or other support so your child can stay away from other people.  
   Health department staff will NOT ask for  
   - Social Security numbers or immigration status  
   - Money  
   - Bank account or credit card numbers

4. **Watch for symptoms of COVID-19.**  
   **Get your child tested if they start to have symptoms, even if they already had a negative COVID-19 test earlier during quarantine.** Symptoms can appear up to 14 days after someone is infected. Symptoms include:  
   - Fever or chills  
   - Cough  
   - Headache  
   - Sore throat  
   - Loss of taste or smell  
   *Children may say that food “tastes bad” or “tastes funny.”*  
   - Feeling out of breath or having trouble breathing  
   - Runny nose or nasal congestion  
   - Diarrhea, nausea or vomiting  
   - Feeling unusually tired or weak  
   - Muscle aches or body aches

Most children and teens with COVID-19 have mild illness and get better at home without needing to see a doctor. Have them rest and drink plenty of fluids if they feel sick. If they are at least 6 months old, over-the-counter medicine like acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (Motrin® or Advil®) can help with fever or pain.  

**Call your child’s doctor if their symptoms get worse,** especially if they have trouble breathing. See “When to get medical care” below.

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**How to get a COVID-19 test for your child**  
- Contact your child’s doctor or the clinic listed on their health insurance card.  
- If your child does not have health insurance or a regular doctor, call  
  - SFPDH New Patient Appointment Call Center for COVID-19 at 415-682-1740  
  - Mission Neighborhood Health Center at 415-552-3870 x2217  
- For other places where your child can get tested, see [https://sf.gov/gettested](https://sf.gov/gettested)
Ending quarantine: When can my child safely be around others?

If your child had close contact to someone with COVID-19, and wasn’t fully vaccinated for COVID-19, they can leave home after one of the following:

- They have a **negative test, collected on or after day 5, AND no symptoms for 5 days** after their last* close contact (*The day of their last close contact is day 0*).
- They have **no symptoms for 10 days** after their last* close contact, if they didn’t get tested on or after day 5.

Keep watching your child closely for COVID-19 symptoms until 14 days after their last close contact. There is still a small chance that your child could be infected and could spread the infection to others.

**Example 1: Quarantine, no test on or after day 5**

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<th>Sunday</th>
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<td>Exposure to COVID-19</td>
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<td>DAY 1</td>
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<td>DAY 2</td>
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<td>DAY 10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>DAY 11</td>
<td>12</td>
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</table>


Your child had close contact to someone with COVID-19 on the 1st. They have no symptoms for 10 days after the close contact and did not get tested. They can leave home on the 12th (day 11).

Frequently asked questions

If my child develops symptoms during quarantine, when can they leave home?

If your child develops symptoms, have them tested, even if they had a negative test earlier in quarantine.

- **If your child has symptoms and tests negative**, they can end quarantine 5 days after their last close contact with the person with COVID-19 assuming they have another negative test on or after day 5.
- **If they test positive**, see “**If my child has a positive test**” below.
- **If they have symptoms but don’t get tested**, they must wait until all of the following are true:
  - 10 days have passed since their last close contact with the person with COVID-19, **and**
  - 10 days have passed since their symptoms started, **and**
  - They haven’t had a fever in the last 24 hours, without taking medicine for fever, **and**
  - Their symptoms are improving.
If my child tests positive for COVID-19, when can they leave home?

They must stay home until all of the following are true:

- 5 days have passed since their symptoms started, and
- They haven’t had a fever in the last 24 hours, without taking medicine for fever, and
- Their symptoms are improving and
- They have a negative test collected on or after Day 5

If they tested positive, but never had any symptoms, they must stay home for 5 days after they were tested and have a negative test collected on or after Day 5. If they are not tested again, they must stay home for 10 days.

For detailed information on leaving home after COVID-19 symptoms, exposures and positive tests, see https://sfdph.org/dph/covid-19/isolation-and-quarantine.asp

My child is the only one in the family who was exposed to COVID-19. Does everyone else at home have to quarantine too?

No. Only people who had close contact with someone with COVID-19 must quarantine. Other people who live with your child can leave home.

My child was exposed to COVID-19 at school. Their school says they must quarantine except to go to school. What do we need to do? (“Test to stay” or “modified quarantine”)

There has been very little spread of COVID-19 in schools in California. For this reason, the California Department of Public Health allows a “modified quarantine” for elementary, middle and high school students who are exposed to COVID-19 at school while wearing masks. This is in alignment with the CDC “test to stay” strategy for school-based exposures.

If the close contact happened at school, and both your child and the infected person were wearing masks the whole time, your child can attend school in-person during their quarantine. They can also ride a school bus or take public transportation to and from school.

Your child must:

- Continue to wear a face mask in school.
- Get tested for COVID-19 twice: once immediately after notification of exposure and once more on or after day 5 from last date of known close contact.
- Remain free of any COVID-19 symptoms during this time.

Your child must stay at home except to go to school. They cannot leave home for activities outside of school. They cannot play wind instruments or do extracurricular activities at school, including school sports, during their modified quarantine. For more information, see CDPH Schools Guidance Q&A.

Modified quarantine is only for children who were exposed at school. If your child had close contact to COVID-19 outside of school and was not fully vaccinated for COVID-19, they cannot go to school during their quarantine.
What if my child’s close contact is a member of our household and my child cannot isolate away from that person?

If your child cannot stay away from the infected person, they must quarantine for 5-10 days after the person with COVID-19 is no longer infectious.

What if my child was vaccinated for COVID-19?

Children who are for COVID-19 don’t have to quarantine as long as they don’t have symptoms.

- You should have them tested 5 - 7 days after their last close contact. CDC and SFDPH now recommend this because the Omicron variant can sometimes infect fully vaccinated people.
- Watch for symptoms for the 14 days after their close contact. If your child has symptoms, get them tested and keep them at home until you get the test result.

What if my child already had COVID-19 in the last 3 months?

If your child had COVID-19 in the last 3 months, confirmed by a test, they don’t have to quarantine, as long as they don’t have COVID-19 symptoms.

If your child starts to have symptoms, they must stay at home until you can consult their doctor or clinic. Their doctor will decide if they need to be tested or stay at home, and for how long. If you don’t consult your child’s doctor and don’t get a test, your child must stay home until:
  - 10 days have passed since their symptoms started, and
  - They haven’t had a fever in the last 24 hours, without taking medicine for fever, and
  - Their symptoms are improving.

Protect your loved ones and others in your home.

It can be scary to think that your child might have COVID-19 and might give it to your family and other people you live with. You can take some simple and important steps to help keep COVID-19 from spreading in your home.

Not everyone can take all these steps, especially with young children. However, by taking as many steps as you can, as much as you can, you can protect those you love and those living with you.

- Keep your child away from other people in the home, especially older people, people who are not fully vaccinated for COVID-19, and others who are more likely to get very sick from COVID-19. See CDC’s list of groups at increased risk of severe illness.
- If your child is old enough, have them stay in a separate room as much as they can, especially when eating, sleeping, and other times that their mask is off.
- If your child is at least 2 years old, have them wear a face mask at home as much as they can, except when sleeping. Have everyone else at home wear face masks around your child and in rooms that your child has been in. For safety, children under 24 months old and anyone else who cannot take off a mask without help should not wear a mask.
  - If your child is old enough to stay alone in a room that no one else enters, they do not have to wear a mask in their room.
**Open windows** if it's safe to do so. The virus that causes COVID-19 can build up in the air indoors, so you’ll want to **bring in as much fresh air as possible**. You can also put a fan in front of an open window to blow indoor air out of the house.

If you live with young children, open windows no wider than 4 inches to keep children from falling out of open windows. You can buy window locks that keep windows from opening more than 4 inches; they are available at most hardware stores. For more information, see [CDPH Guidance](https://sfcdcp.org/i&q).

- Have your child wash or sanitize their hands often.
- Don’t let your child share personal household items, like cups, utensils, and towels.
- Protect yourself and others if you need to take your child to get tested or get medical care.
  - If you have a car, taking your child in your own car is safer for others than riding public transportation, taxis or rideshares (Lyft, Uber). Make sure you and your child both wear masks when sharing a vehicle. Keep the windows open and the fan on maximum, set to fresh air, while in the car with your child.
  - If you and your child can walk or bike, this is safer than sharing a car with your child.

**When to get medical care for your child.**

- **Get medical care if your child has COVID-19 symptoms that are getting worse**, especially if they have trouble breathing. Worrisome signs can include:
  - Feeling out of breath, dizzy or light-headed when they’re doing their usual activities at home, like playing, going to the bathroom, showering, or walking around inside.
  - Getting dehydrated because they feel too sick to eat or drink.

- **Seek emergency medical care** immediately for any of these warning signs:
  - Trouble breathing.
  - Chest pain or pressure that is not going away.
  - Being more confused than usual.
  - Trouble waking up or staying awake.
  - Blue-ish lips or face.

- Call ahead to the clinic or emergency room, if you can. Tell them that your child may have COVID-19. If you call 911, tell the operator that your child may have COVID-19. This helps health care staff prepare for your arrival.
- When you arrive at the clinic, tell the staff immediately that your child may have COVID-19.