

# Isolation and Quarantine Quick Reference Guidance for Higher Education

This is a companion piece to the [Guidance for Mitigating COVID-19 at Higher Education Institutions \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/guideihe.pdf\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/guideihe.pdf). The following goes into deeper detail on isolation and quarantine guidance and acts as a quick reference for putting isolation and quarantine steps into practice.

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## Isolation guidelines for people with COVID-19

- Isolation means keeping people who have tested positive for COVID-19 away from people who do not or may not have COVID-19.
- Isolation rooms on campus should be physically separated from rooms where students who have tested negative or have unknown COVID-19 status reside.
- Faculty, staff, and students with COVID-19 who live off campus should stay at home and can further reduce the spread of COVID-19 within their household by following guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), [If You Are Sick or Caring for Someone \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/index.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/index.html).
- Those who are off-campus and need essential services not provided by the college or university should contact the public health case interviewer they originally talked to for information on additional resources, or contact their local public health agency.
- People in isolation should have their own bedroom and bathroom, if possible.
- In situations where a student needing isolation shares a suite, apartment, or house with others, the student would ideally find a separate isolation space – meaning, a space where they can have a separate bedroom and bathroom from others. If this is not possible, the student should, at a minimum, have their own bedroom and be given instructions on how to isolate in place, including how to share a bathroom, as needed.
- If students in isolation need to share a bedroom with others who have COVID-19, ensure that all students sharing a space have tested positive for COVID-19. Only students who test positive for COVID-19 should be grouped together.
  - Students who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 based on symptoms only and have not had the diagnosis confirmed by a positive COVID-19 test should NOT be grouped together with

students who have tested positive for COVID-19 (i.e., “lab-confirmed”). Many different viruses can cause symptoms similar to COVID-19, including influenza. Accidentally putting a student who has influenza with a student who has COVID-19 could result in infecting both of them with both viruses. It is important to make sure that testing is part of any isolation plan. If testing is not available, do not place students diagnosed with COVID-19 based on symptoms in the same rooms as those who have tested positive for COVID-19.

- Staff who need to interact with students in isolation should have appropriate masks, gloves, and other personal protective equipment (PPE). See “Precautions for staff when entering an isolation/quarantine room” below.
- Students in isolation should not have any visitors other than staff who are performing health checks or other services and who are wearing appropriate PPE.

## Length of time in isolation

- Students, faculty, and staff who have tested positive for COVID-19 or have been diagnosed with COVID-19 must stay home and away from others until all three of these things are true:
  - They feel better. Their cough, shortness of breath, or other symptoms have improved.
  - It has been 10 days since they first felt sick.
  - They have had no fever for at least 24 hours, without using medicine that lowers fever.
- Students, faculty, and staff do NOT need to test negative before being released from isolation.
  - This is an unnecessary use of testing resources.
  - Some people will continue to test positive for COVID-19 even though they are no longer infectious.

## What to provide students in isolation

### All students

- Alternative modes of course instruction.
- Academic accommodations if the student is not well enough to do coursework.

### Students living on campus or those who are using on-campus resources for isolation

- Access to a phone.
- Supplies, such as a thermometer, face coverings, sanitizing wipes, tissues, soap, hand sanitizer, toiletries, medications, and contact information for whom the student should call in an emergency.
- Delivered meals and laundry services.
- Virtual health checks.
- Regular check-ins by health services staff (ideally virtual) to assess the student’s status and well-being.

## Resources

- [If You Are Sick: COVID-19](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/sick.html)  
([www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/sick.html](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/sick.html))
- [What To Do if You Have COVID-19](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/case.pdf)  
([www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/case.pdf](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/case.pdf))
- [CDC: If You Are Sick or Caring for Someone](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/index.html)  
([www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/index.html))
- [CDC: People at Increased Risk](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/index.html)  
([www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/index.html))

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## Quarantine guidelines for people exposed to COVID-19

- Quarantine means keeping people who have been exposed to COVID-19 away from other people.
- People who are identified as a close contact of someone with COVID-19 and who do not have symptoms of COVID-19 should stay away from others for 14 days past the last date of the contact. Close contact generally means spending 15 minutes or more over the course of a day within 6 feet of someone with COVID-19 while the person was infectious.
  - People who have tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 90 days and have already recovered do not need to stay at home for 14 days.
- Students in quarantine must have access to alternative modes of course instruction.
- When possible, people in quarantine should have their own bedroom and bathroom.
  - If it is necessary for people in quarantine to share a bathroom, consider the following strategies:
    - For a single bathroom – have the student clean and disinfect after using.
    - For a common bathroom – have a designated stall and sink for the student, and require them to wear face coverings whenever leaving their room to use the bathroom facilities.
  - If it is necessary for people in quarantine to share a bedroom, consider the following strategies:
    - Beds should be spaced at least 6 feet apart.
    - Urge students to wear a cloth face covering at all times when in their room except when eating, sleeping, drinking, or if they have a medical reason that prevents them from wearing the cloth face covering.
    - Prioritize students who have underlying conditions that increase their risk for severe illness due to COVID-19 for individual quarantine off-site, if necessary.
- Students in quarantine should have their food delivered when possible and access to laundry services. Health checks should be virtual.

- If students need to leave their room for food or laundry or other essential needs, they should:
  - Perform the task alone.
  - Ensure they are wearing a face covering the entire time.
  - Stay at least 6 feet away from others at all times. Avoid talking or interacting with others.
  - Leave their room at less busy times.
  - Return to their room as quickly as possible.
- Students may spend time outside as long as they are not interacting with others.
  - Ideally, people who go outside should do so by themselves and stay on property that is just outside their house or building to minimize contact with others.
  - A college or university's decision to allow people outside will depend on the facility and on whether students are otherwise following guidance for quarantine, wearing masks, and staying at least 6 feet from others.
- Students in quarantine should have access to supplies such as a thermometer, face coverings, sanitizing wipes, tissues, soap, hand sanitizer, toiletries, medications, and contact information for whom the student should call in an emergency.
- Students in quarantine should not have any visitors.
- When there is evidence that COVID-19 has spread in a residence hall, or on a floor of a residence hall, but no obvious, direct epidemiologic links between those infected, MDH may recommend a modified quarantine in which students living on the floor or hall are directed to stay in their rooms as much as possible. MDH may also recommend:
  - Broader testing of that floor or residence hall on a weekly basis until the number of new cases goes to zero.
  - Enhancing screening for symptoms among staff and students in that residence hall/floor.
  - Providing some essential services to students in that residence hall/floor to limit mixing with other students.
  - Isolating people who test positive at another location.

## Resource

- [CDC: When to Quarantine  
\(\[www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine.html\]\(https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine.html\)\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine.html)

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## Returning home for isolation or quarantine

- Inform parents and guardians that they should consider the option for their student to move home for the duration of isolation or quarantine.

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- MDH does NOT recommend that a campus send students home when implementing a two-week pause of campus activities to try to stop the spread of COVID-19, or that they send students home if there is a larger outbreak. It is important for institutes of higher education to increase efforts on campus to control spread of COVID-19 as a way to enforce expected behavioral norms.
- Follow guidance for how to encourage people to minimize the risk of spreading COVID-19 to others while traveling and staying at home.
  - Guidance on how to travel home while minimizing transmission to others:
    - [Interim Guidance for Facilities Providing Non-Emergency Transportation Services during COVID-19](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/guidetransport.pdf)  
([www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/guidetransport.pdf](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/guidetransport.pdf))
    - [CDC: Considerations for Non-emergency Vehicle Transportation for Tribal Communities During COVID-19](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/tribal/non-ems-transportation.html)  
([www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/tribal/non-ems-transportation.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/tribal/non-ems-transportation.html))
  - Guidance on how to care safely for a sick person:
    - [CDC: If You Are Sick or Caring for Someone](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/index.html)  
([www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/index.html))
    - The guidance above includes taking precautions at home, such as staying separated within the home, wearing a mask, avoiding sharing of items, and cleaning and disinfecting. Inform students that caregivers and anyone else in close contact with them during their infectious period will have to quarantine as well.
- Provide information to students and their families on the duration of isolation or quarantine. Highlight the importance of staying home during isolation or quarantine and avoiding unnecessary visitors. Refer to [CDC: When You Can be Around Others After You Had or Likely Had COVID-19](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/end-home-isolation.html) ([www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/end-home-isolation.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/end-home-isolation.html)). MDH/local public health also have template letters for parents to help determine if a student can return home safely and follow recommendation steps to prevent further transmission of COVID-19 at home.
  - Students should stay on campus if there is not a safe place for them to go during isolation or quarantine.
  - Students should also not return home to households where there are people who are at higher risk for severe illness, or if their community is one that has a high rate of COVID-19 infections.
  - Those who are housing a person in isolation or quarantine should be mindful of their own risk status. If there are high-risk people at home, the person in isolation or quarantine should consider other options besides returning home.

## Resources

- [CDC: People at Increased Risk](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/index.html)  
([www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/index.html))

- [CDC: Health Equity Considerations and Racial and Ethnic Minority Groups \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/health-equity/race-ethnicity.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/health-equity/race-ethnicity.html)

## Precautions for staff when entering an isolation or quarantine room

- Staff should wear appropriate masks, gloves, and other personal protective equipment (PPE) when entering an isolation or quarantine room.
- Health care staff who will have direct face-to-face contact with people in isolation or quarantine should wear medical, surgical, or N95 masks, a face shield, and other appropriate protection.
- Precautions and PPE for facilities staff or staff who need to enter an isolation or quarantine residence for other non-health care reasons include the following:
  - Have the person in isolation or quarantine go into another room within the residence whenever possible.
  - If the person in isolation/quarantine must remain present, then:
    - The person in isolation/quarantine should wear a cloth face covering or surgical mask.
    - Staff should wear appropriate PPE (surgical mask, face shield, and gloves) and perform hand hygiene after removing their mask and other items.
      - Refer to the following grid for information about masks, gloves, and other protection: [Contingency Standards of Care for COVID-19: Personal Protective Equipment for Congregate Care Settings \(www.health.state.mn.us/communities/ep/surge/crisis/ppegrid.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/ep/surge/crisis/ppegrid.pdf).
    - Staff wearing appropriate protection are not considered exposed to COVID-19 even if they are within 6 feet of a person with COVID-19 for 15 minutes or more.
    - Staff should stay at least 6 feet away from others whenever possible, even while wearing protection.

## Cleaning and disinfection of isolation or quarantine spaces

- Ideally, wait 24 hours after the student leaves the isolation or quarantine space before allowing staff to enter to clean or disinfect.
- Less time may be needed if:
  - Windows are opened for ventilation.
  - Sufficient time has passed for air exchanges to remove potentially infectious aerosol particles. Where possible, consult with the building HVAC experts to determine air exchange rate.
- Get more information on air turnover rates at [CDC: Guidelines for Environmental Infection Control Appendix B. Air \(www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol/guidelines/environmental/appendix/air.html#b1\)](https://www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol/guidelines/environmental/appendix/air.html#b1).

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- Ensure that staff who are performing cleaning and disinfection:
  - Wear face coverings.
  - Wear disposable gloves.
  - Wear any other protection that might be required for the specific cleaning agents they are using.
- If staff are not wearing coveralls or a disposable gown, have staff wash work clothes at the end of their shift, at home, or on site.
- More detailed guidance in in the Resources section below.

### Resources

- [COVID-19 Cleaning and Disinfecting Guidance for Institutes of Higher Education \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/cleanihe.html\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/cleanihe.html)
- [Frequently Asked Questions About COVID-19 for Facilities Service and Cleaning Staff \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/cleanfaq.html\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/cleanfaq.html)



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