

PHM HEALTH BRIEF

Perspective on Updated CDC Guidance for COVID-19

A detailed 3D rendering of a COVID-19 virus particle, showing its characteristic spherical shape covered in numerous spike proteins. The particle is rendered in shades of blue and purple, with a textured surface.

August 31, 2022

At PHM, our team of PhD-led research experts continuously monitors the latest news, research, and developments for new insights on the COVID-19 pandemic to improve the health and safety of our clients.

PHM is providing guidance in response to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announcement on [August 11, 2022](#), to loosen certain COVID-19 guidelines. Here's the latest on quarantine, isolation, testing, and masking.

CDC Announcement

While the CDC continues to promote [up-to-date](#) vaccination and improved ventilation at all times as well as masking when local [COVID-19 Community Levels](#) are high, the new guidelines [eased](#) recommendations on screening testing, physical distancing, and quarantine. Additionally, infected individuals are still not required to receive a negative test before leaving isolation, and under the new guidance, if they do re-test positive upon leaving isolation (e.g., on day 6), they need to continue to wear a well-fitted mask, but do not need to return to isolation.

The CDC [cited](#) the availability of tools to protect ourselves, including vaccinations, boosters, and treatments, and understanding mitigation measures such as masking, testing, and ventilation to support the transition to a more lenient set of guidelines.

This signals a significant shift in the CDC's approach to the pandemic whereby a higher level of infection is tolerated if hospitals maintain capacity. Even though the CDC has relaxed its approach, any single individual's decision making regarding what's right for them and their families will depend on personal circumstances and may diverge from the CDC's general guidance.

Perspective on Updated CDC Guidance for COVID-19

QUARANTINE¹

CDC GUIDANCE

- + No quarantine recommended regardless of vaccination status
- + Wear a high-quality mask as soon as you find out you were exposed through day 10
- + Get tested at least 5 full days after your last exposure
- + Take [extra precautions](#) if you will be around people who are [more likely to get very sick from COVID-19](#)
- + Watch for symptoms, and isolate immediately if you develop symptoms
- + See the full details [here](#)

PHM GUIDANCE

No quarantine. At this stage of the pandemic, *not* [quarantining if you are an asymptomatic close contact is reasonable](#). If you do not quarantine after an exposure, follow the CDC guidance, and we strongly encourage repeat testing (e.g., use 2-3 rapid antigen tests from day 3 to day 6)

Quarantine based on risk and circumstances. There are many circumstances under which you **should** quarantine if possible. Quarantine if:

- + You may expose other individuals who are at high risk for severe COVID-19
- + You are not [up-to-date](#) on your vaccines **and** your prior infection was >6 months ago or you've never been infected
- + You are immunocompromised (as this increases your likelihood of contracting COVID-19 as a result of your exposure to a positive case)
- + You had a very close contact - i.e., you were in close proximity for a long period of time to a COVID positive individual (for example, your household member has COVID-19 and you are unable to physically separate)

If you fall into one of these higher risk categories but cannot quarantine due to practical reasons (e.g., need to go to work), follow the "no quarantine" guidance above and minimize close contact with other people whenever possible for at least 5 days after the exposure.

ISOLATION²

CDC GUIDANCE

CDC guidance includes, but is not limited to:

- + If you had no symptoms, you may end isolation after day 5
- + If you had symptoms, you may end isolation after day 5 if:
 - You are fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medication)
 - Your symptoms are improving
- + If you still have a fever or your other symptoms have not improved, continue to isolate until they improve

See the full details [here](#).

PHM GUIDANCE

Given that many infected individuals continue to be infectious after day 5, we recommend the following isolation approach:

- + Minimum isolation period between 5 and 7 days
- + Take two antigen tests 24-48 hours apart to end isolation. If one or both of your antigen tests is positive, continue to isolate until you receive two sequential negative antigen tests

Note that rapid antigen tests detect active infections - therefore, if the antigen test is positive, you are most likely infectious.



MASKING (AFTER LEAVING ISOLATION)

CDC GUIDANCE

PHM GUIDANCE

Removing your mask after ending isolation:

- + After you have ended isolation (a minimum of 5 days), when you are feeling better (no fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and symptoms improving),
 - Wear your mask through day 10;

OR

- If you have access to antigen tests, you should consider using them. With two sequential negative tests 48 hours apart, you may remove your mask sooner than day 10.

We agree with the CDC's mask guidance. However, we would add a testing requirement in order to end isolation after day 5. If your antigen test is still positive on day 5 and beyond, continue to isolate if possible and test every 24-48 hours. Once you have two sequential negative results, you can exit isolation and drop your mask. This may mean you need to continue isolating and testing beyond day 10.

To reinforce the CDC guidance on masking, [wearing a high-quality mask such as a N95 or KN95 is key](#), particularly if you exit isolation on day 6 and do not have access to antigen testing OR test positive and must exit isolation due to practical reasons (e.g., return to work - in addition to wearing an N95/KN95, avoid close contact with other people whenever possible).

MASKING (GENERAL GUIDANCE IN PUBLIC SETTINGS)

CDC GUIDANCE

PHM GUIDANCE

When the [COVID-19 Community Level is High](#):

- + Wear a high-quality mask or respirator

When the [COVID-19 Community Level is Medium or High](#):

- + If you are at [high risk of getting very sick](#), wear a high-quality mask or respirator (e.g., N95) when indoors in public
- + If you have household or social contact with someone at high risk for getting very sick, consider wearing a high-quality mask when indoors with them

This CDC masking guidance is robust - people should mask in public settings when their local [COVID-19 Community Level](#) is High.

When the Community Level is Medium, people should take extra precautions when around high risk individuals - wearing a well-fitted mask (N95/KN95) is an effective way to protect those who are most vulnerable.

Masking should always be an option for those who want to wear them based on unique circumstances and risk tolerance.

SCREENING TESTING (NO SYMPTOMS OR KNOWN EXPOSURES)

CDC GUIDANCE

PHM GUIDANCE

For those who are asymptomatic and have no known contacts:

- + Screening testing of asymptomatic people without known exposures will **no longer be recommended** in most community settings

When the [COVID-19 Community Level is Medium or High](#):

- + If you have household or social contact with someone at high risk for getting very sick, consider self-testing to detect infection before contact

Screening testing remains an effective tool, but can be used more selectively than earlier in the pandemic:

- + Individuals at high risk for severe disease from COVID-19 may choose to continue serially testing themselves or those around them
- + Targeted antigen testing can be used to de-risk events/gatherings
- + Testing may be used by individuals based on their personal risk level, exposure risk, and other unique circumstances

- 1) Quarantine is a strategy used to prevent transmission of COVID-19 by keeping people who have been in close contact with someone with COVID-19 apart from others. Defining exposure timeline: Day 0 is the day of your last exposure to someone with COVID-19; Day 1 is the first full day after your last exposure
- 2) Isolation is used to separate people with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 from those without COVID-19. Defining isolation timeline:
 - a. If you had symptoms, Day 0 of isolation is the day of symptom onset, regardless of when you tested positive, and Day 1 is the first full day after the day your symptoms started.
 - b. If you had no symptoms, Day 0 is the day you were tested (not the day you received your positive test result), Day 1 is the first full day following the day you were tested. If you develop symptoms within 10 days of when you were tested, the clock restarts at day 0 on the day of symptom onset

Note the guidance above does not replace federal, state, or local laws or requirements.

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Whether managing routine and preventative care or addressing serious or complex conditions, PHM's rigorous integrated approach facilitates access to the latest information, top specialists, advanced diagnostics, and cutting-edge treatments. We consistently deliver better care and outcomes helping people live healthier, longer lives.

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Or message us at info@privatehealth.com.

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