

Guidance for Quarantine and Mask Use

In addition to social distancing and good hygiene practices, principle components for reducing the transmission of COVID-19 among North Dakota citizens include testing, isolation of cases, quarantine of contacts and universal use of face masks. This guidance allows for the consideration of face mask use to determine if a person exposed to someone with COVID-19 will need to quarantine.

[Evidence](#) is showing that masking can be highly effective in reducing the risk of virus transmission from an infected individual (the source) to their close contacts. Masking can reduce the risk of virus spread from an infected person and reduce virus exposure to the close contact. Masking works well and with minimal training can be implemented almost universally.

Contact tracing and quarantining contacts is also effective in reducing transmission of COVID-19. However, it has limitations:

- People can transmit COVID-19 prior to symptom onset and asymptotically.
- People need to be tested, diagnosed and reported to the health department so they can be interviewed to identify their close contacts.
- People who are infected, need to cooperate fully with disease investigators.
- People who are named as close contacts need to comply with quarantine recommendations.
- There are numerous exemptions to quarantine recommendations so people can continue to work in industries and jobs that are deemed critical or essential.

With this guidance, close contacts will continue to be defined as individuals who have been within six feet of an infected person for a total of 15 minutes during a 24-hour period. **Close contacts will still need to be quarantined for 14 days from their last exposure unless both the infected person and close contact were wearing a mask at all times during the exposure, this would exempt the contact from being quarantined.** Care must be taken that activities that require removing masks are done only when people can socially distance themselves appropriately.

Except as noted below, the quarantine exception applies to most non-health care settings. This exception includes, but may not be limited to:

- Childcare centers where staff and older children (age two or above) are able to wear a mask.
- Group homes
- K-12 schools and preschools
- Colleges and universities
- Work settings
- Social interactions
- Other settings where both the infected person and contact were masked during the exposure.

People, who because of mask use, are exempted from quarantine should:

- Wear a mask while around others;
- Watch for symptoms for 14 days and be tested if symptom(s) occur;
- If you become aware that you have been potentially exposed, consider being tested 7-10 days after the last exposure.
- Practice social distancing, including avoiding large crowds and gatherings.

People who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 will still be required to isolate for at least 10 days, with absence of fever for at least 24 hours and improvement in symptoms.

Case investigation and contact tracing staff will continue to notify close contacts of their exposures to COVID-19 and will provide recommendations whether quarantine or self-monitoring due to masking is appropriate for the exposure.

References

Wang Y, Tian H, Zhang L, *et al.* Reduction of secondary transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in households by face mask use, disinfection and social distancing: a cohort study in Beijing, China. *BMJ Global Health* 2020;5:e002794. doi:10.1136/bmjgh-2020-002794

Doungngern P, Suphanchaimat R, Panjangampatthana A, Janekrongtham C, Ruampoom D, Daochaeng N, *et al.* Case-control study of use of personal protective measures and risk for SARS-CoV-2 infection, Thailand. *Emerg Infect Dis.* 2020 Nov [date cited]. <https://doi.org/10.3201/eid2611.203003>