

From our Registered Nurse:

What to do if you have been exposed to COVID-19

First, don't panic. Just because you were exposed to COVID-19 does not mean that you are infected and even if you are infected, that does not necessarily mean that you will get seriously ill. Most people who get the coronavirus have mild symptoms at most.

When you have had exposure, you should **self-quarantine for 14 days**. That means staying at home for 2 weeks from the time you were exposed. During this time, you should go out only if absolutely necessary and if you do, wear a face mask the whole time. Hopefully your symptoms will be fairly light, but you want to do everything you can to prevent spreading the virus to other people. Even if you turn out not to be sick, act as if you are. When you can, have friends drop off groceries for you or order things that you need online.

You should **reach out to your primary care doctor** and let them know about your exposure. They will help you **get tested**. Your doctor can also talk with you about any specific concerns you have with COVID and any health issues that you already have.

You can find an **interactive map of testing sites** in MA [here](#). The map will tell you more about each site. **Most sites require scheduling an appointment ahead of time**, so do not show up to a testing site without checking in. The map will also tell you their hours and if they will test people without insurance.

Quarantine can be a lonely and stressful time. It is important to **take care of yourself while quarantined**, both physically and emotionally:

- **Monitor your symptoms carefully.** Watch for coughing, difficulty breathing, or a sudden loss of taste and smell. Take your temperature twice every day. For most people a fever starts at 100.5 F. If you do develop a fever, notify your doctor. You can treat any symptoms you develop with the same over the counter medications you use for a cold or flu, such as Tylenol. Do not take medicines that you haven't used before unless your doctor prescribes them.
- **Make time to do things you enjoy that can keep your spirits up.** Some people find that quarantine gives them time to do things they haven't had time to do before, whether it's a home improvement project that's been on your list for years, the book you never finished, or that TV series everyone was talking about a few years ago. Don't feel guilty if you find yourself enjoying your quarantine. You are doing an important job keeping others safe.



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- **Reach out to friends and family.** Even though they can't be with you physically, they can still be a support to you by phone, video calls, text, and emails. Your family may want to help you as much as they can. Don't be afraid to set limits if the attention starts making you anxious. Social supports are there to support you.
- Staying at home doesn't mean you have to stay inside. If you have a yard or a porch, **get outside** from time to time to get fresh air and sunshine. Both are important for your health and wellbeing.

Remember, **even if you do test negative, you should complete your full quarantine.** COVID-19 can be a very slow moving disease. It's possible your test was taken before there was a big enough infection to be caught by the test. Depending on when you were exposed and when you were tested, your doctor or the testing service may give you guidelines on whether stopping quarantine early is possible.

Updated 12/3/2020

Sources:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine-isolation.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/testing/diagnostic-testing.html>

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/covid-19-testing-guidance/download>

<https://memamaps.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=eba3f0395451430b9f631cb095febf13>

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-testing#testing-sites->

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/diseases-and-conditions/if-youve-been-exposed-to-the-coronavirus>

<https://hub.jhu.edu/2020/03/23/how-to-self-quarantine-self-isolate/>



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