

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Exposure - No Symptoms

Definition

- Exposure (close contact) to a person with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 infection
- You or your child have NO symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough or trouble breathing)

Exposure to COVID-19: Levels of Risk

- **Household Close Contact.** Lives with a person who has positive test for COVID-19. This carries the highest risk of transmitting the infection.
- **Other Close Contact.** The CDC defines 6 feet as how far coughing can spread the virus. How long the close contact lasts can also be important. Prolonged close contact is defined as more than 10 minutes. Close contact includes kissing, hugging or sharing eating and drinking utensils. It also includes close conversations. Direct contact with secretions of a person with COVID-19 is also close contact. Includes being in the same childcare room, classroom or carpool. These exposures are usually lower risk than living with an infected person.
- **In Same Building - Low Risk Exposure.** Being in the same school, place of worship, workplace or building carries a small risk for exposure.
- **In Same City - Low Risk Exposure.** Living in or travel from a city or country where there is major community spread of COVID-19, also carries a small risk. The CDC lists these "hot spots" . Outdoor contacts are much safer than indoor contacts.

COVID-19 Basics

- **COVID-19 Symptoms:** The most common symptoms are fever, cough and shortness of breath. Less common symptoms are muscle aches, chills, headache, sore throat, runny nose and even diarrhea.
- **Incubation Period for Symptoms:** average 5 days (range 2 to 14 days) after coming in contact with a person who has COVID-19.
- **Mild Infections:** 80% have a mild illness, much like normal flu or a bad cold. The symptoms usually last 2 weeks.
- **No Symptoms but Infected:** About 20% of infected patients have no symptoms.
- **Severe Infections:** 20% of those with symptoms develop trouble breathing from viral pneumonia. Many of these patients need to be admitted to the hospital. People with complications generally recover in 3 to 6 weeks.
- **Deaths:** Children generally have a mild illness and recover quickly. Pediatric deaths are very rare. Older adults, especially those with chronic lung disease or weak immune systems, have the highest death rates. The overall death rate is around 1%.
- **Vaccine:** There currently is no vaccine to prevent COVID-19. Many labs are working on developing a vaccine, but that will take at least a year.
- **Treatment:** Currently, there are no effective anti-viral medicines. Treatment is supportive. Oxygen and IV fluids are used for hospitalized patients. Some patients need to be placed on a ventilator machine to help their breathing.

Trusted Sources for Accurate COVID-19 Information - CDC and AAP

- Nurse call centers and doctors' offices are overloaded with calls. They need to keep their lines open

for sick patients.

- To meet the extreme demand for COVID-19 information, when possible, find your answers online.

Here are the most reliable websites:

- CDC website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus>.
- American Academy of Pediatrics parent website: www.healthychildren.org
- Nurse advice lines and medical call centers are needed for sick patient calls.

Care Advice

1. Exposure but No Symptoms - Overview:

- Although you may have been or were exposed to COVID-19, you do not currently have any symptoms of that infection. COVID-19 infections start within 14 days following the last exposure.
- Since it's been less than 14 days, the exposed person is still at risk for getting sick with COVID-19.
- You need to watch for symptoms until 14 days have passed.
- Stay at home and follow this medical advice.

2. You Do Not Need to Contact Your Doctor:

- The exposed person does not have any symptoms.
- You do not need to call your doctor unless the exposed person becomes sick.
- Doctor's offices, health departments and nurse advice lines have become overwhelmed with calls about sick patients.
- You can find the answers to most of your questions here or online.

3. COVID-19 Testing - Not Needed:

- Tests for COVID-19 are only done on people who are sick (have a fever OR cough) AND also have a health history that puts them at definite risk for having COVID-19. That mainly means close contact with someone who has lab confirmed or suspected COVID-19 disease.
- Testing requires a doctor's order, as with all medical tests.
- When testing is less available, it is only done on patients who need to be admitted to the hospital.
- Caution: If you go to a testing site, without symptoms and without a doctor's order, you will not be tested.

4. Measure Temperature:

- Measure the exposed person's temperature 2 times each day. Do this until 14 days after exposure to COVID-19.
- Report any fevers or respiratory symptoms to your family's doctor.
- Early detection of symptoms and quarantine is the only way to reduce spread of the disease.

5. Home Quarantine - How to do:

- Quarantine means restricting people who were exposed to a contagious disease from contact with others who are well. They are monitored closely to see if they become sick (CDC).
- The level of quarantine needed for an exposed person who has no symptoms, may depend on the degree of exposure.
- For now, the exposed person will need to stay at home.
- Do **Not** allow any visitors. (such as friends)
- Do **Not** go to school or work.
- Do **Not** go to stores, restaurants, places of worship or other public places.
- Avoid public transportation or ride sharing.
- Other family members are not on quarantine unless the exposed person becomes sick. Even then there are exceptions, such as exposed health care workers or first responders who do not have any symptoms.

6. Day 15 or Later After Close Contact and No Symptoms - Quarantine Over:

- The COVID-19 infection starts within 14 days of an exposure.
- The exposed person has no symptoms of respiratory infection (such as fever or cough) during the 14 days after an exposure.
- They should be safe from getting COVID-19.
- If the exposed person has been on home isolation, it can be stopped.

Call Your Doctor Back If...

- Fever occurs
- Cough or trouble breathing occur
- You think you or your child needs to be seen
- You have other questions or concerns

This handout is intended for informational purposes only and should not be used as a substitute for the care and advice of a medical professional. The accuracy of the information contained in this handout is not guaranteed and there may be variations in treatment that your doctor or nurse may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

Copyright 2000-2020 Schmitt Pediatric Guidelines LLC

Author: Barton Schmitt MD, FAAP

Provided by ClearTriage