Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LAC DPH) Guidelines for COVID-19 Cases (Isolation) and Close Contacts

Introduction

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LAC DPH) has aligned with the new California Department of Public Health (CDPH) Guidance on Isolation and Quarantine of the General Public. Effective March 13, 2023, the County Public Health Emergency Orders regarding isolation and quarantine for the general public have been rescinded and are replaced by these guidelines. This document outlines the precautions persons with COVID-19 and persons who are a close contact of a person with COVID-19 must take to prevent the spread of COVID-19 to others.

These guidelines apply to the general public. They are not intended for workplace settings (see "Workplaces" box below).

Summary of significant changes:

People with COVID-19:

- May leave isolation after Day 5 as long as they have been fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever reducing medicines) AND they either have no symptoms or their symptoms are mild and improving. A negative COVID-19 test is no longer required to leave isolation between Day 6-10. **LAC DPH strongly recommends that persons test negative prior to leaving isolation between Day 6-10**.

- Wear a well-fitting mask around others through Day 10. They may discontinue wearing a mask around others between Day 6-Day 10 if they have had two sequential negative COVID-19 tests taken at least one day apart.

Workplaces

Workplace settings are subject to the Cal/OSHA COVID-19 Non-Emergency Regulations or in some workplaces the Cal/OSHA Aerosol Transmissible Diseases (ATD) Standard. Employers must review those regulations specific to controlling COVID-19 transmission in worksites to be in compliance with those applicable requirements. Additional information about how isolation and quarantine guidance affect covered workplaces may be found in COVID-19 Prevention Non-Emergency Regulations FAQs. Refer to LA County Responding to COVID-19 in the Workplace for additional details.

In addition, Healthcare Facilities must follow the State AFL Guidance on Quarantine for Health Care Personnel (HCP) Exposed to SARS-CoV-2 and Return to Work for HCP with COVID-19.

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Definitions

Isolation:

Separates those infected with a contagious disease from people who are not infected.

Confirmed case:

A person who has received a positive result of the presence of SARS-CoV-2 virus as confirmed by a COVID-19 viral test or clinical diagnosis.

Close contact:

A "Close Contact" is a person who has shared the same indoor airspace with someone with COVID-19 for a total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period, while they were infectious.

Examples of indoor airspaces are homes, waiting rooms, airplanes. An example of "a total of 15 minutes or more" is being in the same airspace with the person for 5 minutes at least 3 different times in 24 hours.

Note: A different definition of a close contact is used for persons potentially exposed in very large indoor spaces.

Infectious period:

- *For symptomatic confirmed cases*: A person is considered infectious starting 2 days before their symptoms began (symptom onset date is Day 0) until their isolation ends (i.e., through Days 6-10 after symptoms first appeared **AND** 24 hours have passed with no fever, without the use of fever-reducing medications, and symptoms have improved).

- *For asymptomatic confirmed cases*: A person who never developed symptoms is considered infectious from 2 days before their positive test was taken (test collection date is Day 0) until their isolation ends (i.e., through Day 5).

These infectious periods are used to identify close contacts and possible exposures. Confirmed cases are no longer considered to be within their infectious period once they have met the criteria to leave isolation. However, confirmed cases must continue to follow all isolation precautions through Day 10.

People with symptoms of possible COVID-19

All people with symptoms of possible COVID-19 infection, regardless of vaccination status or previous infection, should stay home away from others and test for COVID-19. See LAC DPH COVID-19 guidance: Learn about Symptoms and What to do If you are Sick.

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Guidelines for Confirmed COVID-19 Cases

Everyone with a COVID-19 infection must isolate, regardless of their vaccination status, history of previous infection, or lack of symptoms.

To count the days:

- For people with symptoms, Day 0 is the first day of symptoms.
- For people with a positive COVID test who never develop symptoms, Day 0 is the day the first positive test was collected. Note, if they start to have symptoms, their new Day 0 is the first day of symptoms.

1. Isolate (Stay Home)

Stay home and away from others through at least Day 5. While in isolation, follow the full isolation instructions to protect others. See isolation instructions (available in multiple languages) at ph.lacounty.gov/covidisolation.

Ending isolation:

- A person may end isolation after Day 5 (i.e., between Day 6-10) if both of the following criteria are met*:
  - They have had no fever for at least 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medicine **AND**
  - Other symptoms are not present, or symptoms are mild and improving.

  *It is strongly recommended that an individual test negative for COVID-19 prior to ending isolation between Day 6 and Day 10. This would reduce the chance of infecting another person with COVID-19.
- People who continue to have symptoms of COVID-19 that are not improving must continue to isolate until their symptoms are improving or until after Day 10.
- People who have left isolation and have a return or a worsening of their COVID-19 symptoms should re-test (with an antigen test). If they test positive, they need to re-start isolation at Day 0.

2. Wear a well-fitting mask

- While in isolation, wear a well-fitting mask if there is a need to be in the same room with others.
- Continue to wear a well-fitting mask around others through Day 10. People who meet the criteria to leave isolation after Day 5 may stop wearing their mask sooner (between Day 6-10) if they have two sequential negative COVID-19 tests taken at least one day apart.

3. Tell close contacts

- Close contacts should be informed that they may be infected. They should follow instructions for close contacts at: ph.lacounty.gov/covidcontacts.

See full instructions for people with COVID-19 at ph.lacounty.gov/covidisolation.

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Guidelines for Close Contacts

As long as a close contact does not have symptoms, they do not need to stay away from others. They should take steps to lower the risk of spreading COVID-19 to others.

To count the days: Day 0 is the day of your last contact (exposure) with the infected person.

Close contacts:

1. **Wear a well-fitting mask indoors around others through Day 10.**
   - This is especially important when near those at higher risk for severe COVID-19 disease.

2. **Test for COVID-19 within 3-5 days after last exposure**
   - In addition, testing as soon as possible after exposure is recommended for persons who live with or who are at higher risk for severe illness. Early knowledge of infection status enables (a) earlier access to treatment options, if indicated (for those who may be at risk for severe illness), and (b) notification of close contacts who may also benefit by knowing if they are infected. If testing negative before Day 3, retest during the 3–5 day window following exposure, with at least 24 hours between the first and second test.
   - Note: Close contacts who were previously infected with COVID-19 in the last 30 days do not need to test unless symptoms develop. Close contacts who were previously infected with COVID-19 in the past 31-90 days should use an antigen test to lower the risk of false positives.
   - If the test result is positive, they must stay home away from others and follow the isolation instructions above for a confirmed COVID-19 case.

3. **Monitor their health through Day 10**
   - If symptoms develop, stay home away from others and test right away.
   - If the test result is positive, they must stay home away from others and follow the isolation instructions for a confirmed COVID-19 case.

See full instructions for close contacts at: ph.lacounty.gov/covidcontacts.

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