San Francisco Public Health Emergency Isolation & Quarantine Directives

Frequently Asked Questions for the Public

May 14, 2020

The San Francisco Public Health Emergency Isolation & Quarantine Directives and Guidelines can be found at www.sfcdcp.org/covid19 under "Isolation & Quarantine Directives."

This FAQ will not repeat all the information given in the guidelines.

General Questions

What is the difference between isolation and quarantine?
- *Isolation* keeps people who have COVID-19 away from those who don't have COVID-19.
- *Quarantine* keeps people who were exposed to COVID-19, and who might be developing COVID-19, away from others while they watch for development of symptoms.

Do I need to wear face covering at home if I am in isolation or quarantine?
If you are in isolation or quarantine, you should wear face covering at home when you are around other people. People who live with you should wear face covering when they are in the same room with you, particularly if you cannot wear a face covering (for example, because it causes trouble breathing).

Use masks and face coverings with caution with children. Infants and children under 2 should not wear face coverings. Those between the ages of 2 and 12 should use them but under adult supervision to ensure that the child can breathe safely and avoid choking or suffocation. Children with breathing problems should not wear a face covering.

How do I get food, medicine, or other essential items if I am in isolation or quarantine?
You are not allowed to go out for anything but essential medical visits. If possible, you should get someone else to do your shopping for you and tell your friend, neighbor, family member, or delivery service to leave your food, medicine, or essential items on the doorstep. If that is not an option, please call 311 to request assistance and tell them you are under isolation or quarantine for COVID-19.

If I am in isolation or quarantine, can I go out for a walk if I wear a mask?
No. You should not leave your home, except for essential medical visits.

If I am in isolation or quarantine, can I go to a doctor's visit?
Yes, you may go out for essential medical care. If you are going in to the doctor, clinic, or emergency room for essential medical care but it is not an emergency, you should call ahead to let them know that you have been diagnosed with or are the close contact of someone with COVID-19. That way, the clinic can give you instructions to lessen the risk of exposure to others. If you have a medical emergency, dial 9-1-1 and tell them you have been diagnosed with or are a close contact of someone with COVID-19. If possible, wear a face mask.

How do I get to my doctor's visit?
If you can, you should drive yourself or walk to the visit. Do not take public transportation. You may consider contacting your medical provider to explore transportation options.

I am in isolation or quarantine. Can I spend time with my pets?
If you are sick with COVID-19 (either suspected or confirmed) or are a close contact of someone with COVID-19, you should restrict contact with pets and other animals, just like you would around other people. At this time, there is no evidence that animals play a significant role in spreading the virus. However, there is some evidence that the virus can spread from people to animals, in some situations. Therefore, it is recommended that people sick with COVID-19 **limit contact with animals**. This can help ensure both you and your animals stay healthy.
- When possible, have another member of your household care for your animals while you are sick.
- Avoid contact with your pet including, petting, snuggling, being kissed or licked, and sharing food.
- If you must care for your pet or be around animals while you are sick, wash your hands before and after you interact with them.

Do I need a letter saying that I am released from isolation or quarantine?
No, you do not need a letter releasing you from isolation or quarantine.

Questions about Isolation

Why do I have to go into isolation if I'm diagnosed with COVID-19?
The virus that causes COVID-19 can easily pass from person-to-person and causes some people who get the disease to need hospital care or die. Keeping people with COVID-19 in isolation prevents the spread of the disease and protects others from getting sick.

Why do I have to tell my Close Contacts to go into Quarantine?
Your Close Contacts are at high risk of getting COVID-19 from you. Once they get COVID-19 they can infect others. We don't know which of those people might get sick, or what day they will get sick. But

we do know that it could take up to 14 days for them to get sick. The must go into Quarantine for 14 days to make sure they can't spread the disease to others.

May I give people the Home Isolation and Quarantine Guidelines via email?
Yes, the quarantine information is available at https://www.sfcdcp.org/covid19 under "Isolation and Quarantine Directives."

I was tested to see if I have COVID-19 and I'm waiting for the results. If the result is negative, what should I do?
This depends on if you had close contact with someone with COVID-19, your symptoms, and your health care provider's suspicion that you could have COVID-19. Please check with your health care provider before you stop following the guidelines.

I have COVID-19, but I just had a blood test that says I have antibodies to COVID-19. Do I still need to self-isolate?
Yes, you must stay at home for the same amount of time. At this point in time we do not know if people can still infect others after developing antibodies. You must continue to self-isolate.

I normally have a cough. Does that change the amount of time I have to remain in self-isolation?
Not really. If your cough or breathing got worse while you had COVID-19, then according to the guidelines it needs to be improving in order to end your isolation. If you still have a cough at the end of your isolation period, you should continue to wear a face mask when around other people.

Questions about quarantine

Why do I need to be in quarantine?
The virus that causes COVID-19 can easily pass from person-to-person and causes some people who get the disease to need hospital care or die. You are at high risk of getting COVID-19 because you have been in Close Contact with someone who is infected. If you get COVID-19 you can infect others. We don't know whether you will get sick, but we do know that it could take up to 14 days for you to get sick, so you are in quarantine for 14 days to make sure you can't spread the disease to others.

Can't I just get a test to determine whether I was infected? If I test negative, do I have to stay in quarantine?
If you are in quarantine, you should get tested for COVID-19. However, getting a negative test is not enough to release you early from quarantine, because it can take up to 14 days for the infection to show itself. For example, if you have a test on day 5 after your Close Contact with an infected person,

and it's negative, you could still develop the infection later, up to day 14 after your Close Contact. Instead, you should just stay in quarantine for the 14 days.