

## Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

# What Happens When Someone Tests Positive for COVID-19

When the Kent County Health Department (KCHD) is notified of a positive case of COVID-19, KCHD staff reach out to the person who tested positive and work with them to identify individuals with whom they have been in close contact for a prolonged period of time in the 2 days before symptom onset or 2 days before test date if the person does not have symptoms.

**The person who tested positive for COVID-19 is instructed to isolate themselves in their home until the following three criteria are met:**

- The patient is fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications
- The patient's other symptoms (e.g. cough) have improved without the use of symptom-reducing medication
- It has been at least 10 days from the first onset of the patient's symptoms.

Once a positive case (confirmed or probable) meets this criteria, KCHD staff will release the individual from isolation and send a release from isolation letter to the individual via email or regular mail. Retesting is NOT recommended within 3 months after the date symptoms started or the date the positive test was done (for those who didn't have symptoms). People who develop new symptoms suggestive of COVID-19 during the 3 months after their test should talk to their doctor to see if retesting is needed.

**Close contacts require a 14-day quarantine from the last date of their exposure to the positive case.** For a person to be considered a close contact to a person with COVID-19 they must meet one of the following criteria:

- Live in the same household as a person with COVID-19
- Have direct physical contact with a COVID-19 case (e.g. shaking hands)
- Have unprotected direct contact with infectious secretions of a COVID-19 case (e.g. infected person coughed or sneezed on them)
- Spend at least 15 minutes within six feet of a person with COVID-19

KCHD staff collect contact information (telephone number) from the positive case for those individuals that meet close contact criteria. KCHD will call these individuals to notify them of their contact to a confirmed case of COVID-19 and provide instructions for the recommended 14-day quarantine period. Close contacts **should stay at home** and distance themselves from others. They should monitor themselves for symptoms of COVID-19 (cough, fever, shortness of breath) and take their temperature twice each day if a thermometer is available. After this initial notification, KCHD staff will touch base with the close contact on day 7 and 14 of their quarantine period to ensure that the individual is free of symptoms. Once the close contact has completed the 14-day period and they are free of symptoms, they will receive verbal notification of their release from quarantine and KCHD staff will send a quarantine release letter to the individual via e-mail or

regular mail.

If a close contact develops symptoms of COVID-19, and they do not get tested, they will be considered a probable positive case, which is treated the same as a positive case and requires isolation. Their identified close contacts will be treated in the same manner as described above.

### **COVID-19 in the Workplace**

It is the responsibility of an employee to inform their employer that they tested positive for COVID-19. Their employer should then conduct contact tracing in the workplace to identify close contacts that should be quarantined. If an employer has questions on this process, they may call KCHD for further guidance. If KCHD staff discover that a positive case (including probable positives) has worked during their infectious period, they will request employer contact information and follow-up with the employer to gather details on the close contacts identified in the workplace for public health monitoring.

#### Healthcare personnel with potential exposure to COVID-19:

KCHD defers to a healthcare organization's infection control/occupational health program to determine if an asymptomatic healthcare personnel (HCP), identified as a close contact, may work while under a 14-day quarantine. In general, the CDC recommends HCPs with prolonged close contact to a positive case quarantine from work for 14 days. KCHD encourages employers bear in mind the context of the exposure, whether the workplace has PPE requirements in place, or if the HCP was exposed to a household member or other community close contact. CDC guidance for mitigating HCP staffing shortages should be considered if it becomes difficult to exclude a HCP from work during their quarantine period.

#### Critical infrastructure workers under quarantine:

Per the CDC, "critical infrastructure workers **may** be permitted to continue work following potential exposure to COVID-19, provided they remain asymptomatic and additional precautions are implemented to protect them and the community". KCHD strongly encourages employers to consider on a case by case basis how crucial the exposed employee's position is to daily operations, whether their duties could be covered by another employee, and if the job can be done while adhering to additional precautions required--maintaining physical distancing, consistently wearing a mask, and immediate self-reporting of the development of symptoms. For more information: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/critical-workers/implementing-safety-practices.html>

If you have an employee or resident who you believe has symptoms concerning for COVID-19, encourage them to contact their primary care provider (PCP) to discuss testing. The PCP or COVID-19 testing hotline can help determine the need for testing and will provide further instructions. Information on testing locations including the Kent County Health Department can be found on our website:

<https://www.accesskent.com/Health/covid-19-testing.htm>

### **Learn more about COVID-19**

COVID-19 is a new virus. It spreads by respiratory droplets of an infected person to others with whom they have close contact, such as people who live in the same household or provide care. You can access up to date information on COVID-19 on the Centers for Disease Control's webpage at:

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

Information current as of July 20, 2020.