

Quarantine

Quarantine is for people or groups who are asymptomatic, but who may be infected with COVID-19. Quarantine keeps these people away from others, so they do not unknowingly infect anyone.

Because some quarantined people might be COVID-19 positive (or might become positive during the quarantine period), individuals in quarantine facilities must be kept under individual quarantine (self-quarantine) within the facility. Those who develop symptoms (meet the person-under-investigation (PUI) criteria) should be tested and managed appropriately.

Quarantine may be applied in different ways during the course of the coronavirus epidemic.

Currently quarantine is applied to:

- An individual or group of persons who were in close contact with a person infected with coronavirus.
- Persons at high risk of having been exposed during international travel
- Symptomatic persons who have been identified as requiring testing or who have tested but are awaiting test results. These persons can be discharged if they test negative.

The conditions for which quarantine is required may change over time.

In some cases, quarantine will be administered. This means that the person must enter into a designated quarantine facility.

Where quarantine is not mandatory, people can self-quarantine at home providing they meet the criteria for self-quarantine (see below). Individuals who are unable to quarantine at home or have failed to comply with quarantine requirements during self-quarantine should be admitted to designated quarantine sites.

Criteria for self-quarantine

In order to successfully self-quarantine, a person requires access to a separate room where the person should self-isolate (e.g. no-one else must sleep or spend time in the room). The person must also be able to contact and/or return to a health facility if their condition worsens.

Where these requirements cannot be met, the person should quarantine in a designated facility. Note that from a practical point of view self-quarantine and self-isolation have the same requirements. Practical advice on how to self-quarantine/self-isolate is included in Section 10.

Period of quarantine

The recommended duration of quarantine for COVID-19 exposure is 14 days from the time of exposure (close contact or entering the country). If the patient remains well during the period of quarantine, they do not need to test during or at the end of the 14-day period.

Alternatives may be considered on a case-by-case basis where travellers may complete part of their quarantine at home after clinical assessment and testing.

People discharged from quarantine or isolation after 14 days should self-monitor for a further 14 days (making a total of 28 days), and report development of any symptoms to their general practitioner, to the NICD hotline or to their local health facility.

Persons in quarantine must be monitored regularly (self-monitoring is recommended where possible). Those who develop symptoms should be tested and managed according to clinical guidelines. People who test positive should no longer be managed at a quarantine facility and should be transferred to an appropriate facility (i.e. hospital or isolation facility).

Isolation

While isolation serves the same purpose as quarantine, it is reserved for those who are already sick and/or have tested positive for COVID-19 infections, but do not require hospital admission for medical care.

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, isolation may include:

- Isolation at a person's home known as self-isolation (see guide on how to self-isolate in Section 11). This is the preferred option but is dependent on the person meeting the self-isolation criteria (see below).
- Isolation in a health facility or at a designated isolation facility. People who cannot self-isolate at home should be considered for admission to such a facility.
- The period of isolation is as follows:
 - Asymptomatic patients: 14 days from time of positive test
 - Mild disease: 14 days from onset of symptoms
 - Moderate or Severe disease: 14 days following clinical stabilisation (no longer requiring oxygen)

There is no need to test/retest at the end of the isolation period. People discharged from isolation after 14 days should self-monitor for a further 14 days, and report development of any symptoms to their general practitioner, to the NICD hotline or to their local health facility.

People in isolation need to be closely monitored (may be self-monitoring) for worsening symptoms which require admission to hospital. A plan for ensuring access to a hospital needs to be in place.

Criteria for self-isolation

In order to successfully self-isolate, a person requires access to a separate room where the person should self-isolate (e.g. no-one else must sleep or spend time in the room). The person must also be able to contact and/or return to a health facility if their condition worsens. Note that the requirements for self-quarantine and self-isolation are the same.