

## COVID-19 CONTACT TRACING

Contact tracing is an important part of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and slowing the spread of the virus. By identifying or “tracing” the contacts of people infected with COVID-19, we can identify other individuals who might be infected, test those individuals for infection, treat those who are also infected and trace their contacts as well.

We have expanded our team of contact tracers to meet the needs of this current situation and to represent the diversity of our region. Through robust contact tracing, San Diego County aims to connect people to care if needed, avoid outbreaks, and reduce COVID-19 infections in our community.



### **How does contact tracing work?**

When a person or “case” is confirmed through laboratory testing to have COVID-19, a case investigator talks to the infected person to find out who he/she had close contact with during the time that they were considered infectious. This infectious time frame includes people who had contact with the case 2 days before they began having symptoms until the case was isolated at home. The people identified through this case investigation are known as the “contacts.”

### **What does coming in contact with a COVID-19 case mean?**

It means having close contact (within 6 feet) with a confirmed COVID-19 case for more than 15 minutes. This may include:

- Household members
- Intimate partners
- People who had unprotected (without a face cover) direct contact with infectious secretions of a COVID-19 case, for instance someone who was coughed or sneezed on.
- People who have been in a small, enclosed environment (such as a home, classroom, meeting room, restaurant, hospital waiting room, etc.) with the case.
- Healthcare workers and others providing care to individuals with COVID-19 may be considered contacts as well if they were not using the recommended personal protective equipment such as masks, gloves, or goggles or following proper cleaning recommendations for handwashing and disinfection of objects and surfaces.

### **What happens after contacts are identified?**

A contact tracer will reach out to contacts to notify them of their potential exposure to a COVID-19 case. The contact tracer will ask the contact about COVID-19 related symptoms they may be experiencing and if they have any underlying medical conditions. They will answer questions and provide information, including how the contacts can help protect themselves and others from COVID-19 and where they can go to get tested.

All contacts are asked to quarantine themselves for 14 days, starting with the last time they were exposed to the case. Some contacts who are essential workers may be given a modified set of quarantine instructions.

All contacts are asked to check their temperature twice a day and watch for symptoms of COVID-19 which may include fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea. If they develop any symptoms, they should isolate themselves immediately and call their healthcare provider for medical advice.

### **Is COVID-19 case and contact information shared?**

The identity and health information of a COVID-19 case and any contacts is always kept private. Personal information about the case will not be shared with anyone who may have been exposed. All information is kept confidential and protected by California's strict privacy laws. All data is stored according to security standards to make sure privacy is maintained. The information is only collected and stored for use by the public health department.

### **What happens after the 14<sup>th</sup> day of quarantine?**

If a contact stays symptom-free through day 14 following their exposure to a COVID-19 case, their quarantine and monitoring period will be complete. They can return to their regular daily activities, and continue to observe the current restrictions because of the pandemic. Certain contacts who are considered higher-risk for complications due to COVID-19, such as people 65 years and older, those in nursing homes or long-term care facilities and people with underlying health conditions will receive additional follow-up on the 15<sup>th</sup> day.

### **What if a contact already has symptoms?**

If someone has symptoms, they should isolate themselves and call their healthcare provider for medical advice.

### **How long will contact tracing continue in San Diego County?**

This will depend on how long it takes to reach adequate levels of immunity to COVID-19 in the community, or develop an effective treatment or vaccine.

**For local information and daily updates on COVID-19, please visit:**

**[www.coronavirus-sd.com](http://www.coronavirus-sd.com)**