



NEWS RELEASE

Making Sense of Quarantine Changes

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On Wednesday, December 2nd, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) released new quarantine guidelines for people who may have been exposed to someone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19. These guidelines are for those who are “close contacts”. A close contact is someone who has been within six feet of a positive case for a total of 15 minutes during their infectious period. The Wisconsin Department of Health Services reviewed these new guidelines and approved their implementation in Wisconsin beginning December 7th.

A 14-day quarantine remains the safest option and is the gold standard for slowing the spread of COVID-19. The incubation period for COVID-19 is two to fourteen days. This means that symptoms can arise anytime up to two weeks after an exposure to someone with COVID-19. However, there are now two alternative strategies for shortening quarantine. Please note that these alternatives may only be enacted if **the individual can practice all of the following, including in their place of employment or education: daily symptom monitoring, physical distancing, correct and consistent mask use, avoiding crowds, ensuring adequate ventilation, environmental cleaning and disinfection, and following hand and cough hygiene 100% of the time during the 14-day quarantine period:**

- 1) Quarantine can end after day 10 IF no symptoms are present. Daily symptom monitoring must continue through day 14. No test is required for this option. This option includes more risk for additional spread compared to a full 14-day quarantine.
- 2) Quarantine can end after day 7 ONLY if the result of a COVID-19 test on day 6 or later is negative AND if no symptoms are present. Daily symptom monitoring must continue through day 14. A pending test result on day 7 is not sufficient; the test should be taken no earlier than day 6. This option includes the most risk for additional spread compared to a full 14-day quarantine.

If symptoms develop at any time between days 7 and 14, even if the individual has already tested negative, the individual should immediately isolate at home, contact their healthcare provider, and [be tested](#).

Schools and businesses may continue to ask students and employees to quarantine for the safer 14-day period, if they elect to do so. If a school or business will be recommending a shorter quarantine, the additional criteria listed above must be met at the school or business. If a school or business is unable to facilitate all of named risk-reduction strategies (symptom monitoring, physical distancing, correct and consistent mask usage, avoiding crowds, hand and cough hygiene, adequate ventilation, and environmental cleaning and disinfection), they should not be permitting close contacts to return to work or school before the end of the full 14-day quarantine period.

These new guidelines are retroactive and can be applied to individuals currently in quarantine if completing the safer 14-day quarantine is not feasible.

Quarantine guidance can be confusing. Those who may have questions can contact the La Crosse County Health Department at covid19@lacrossecounty.org or 608-785-9872. Quarantine guidelines can also be found on our website lacrossecounty.org/covid19. For a visual with the most update quarantine guidelines, visit this Wisconsin Department of Health Services Facebook post: <https://bit.ly/3gqsHDg>.