

ISOLATION PROTOCOL

Revised 7-28-2020¹

What to do if you are sick with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19)

If you have tested positive for COVID-19, or if a healthcare provider or public health official has told you that you are suspected to have COVID-19 based on your symptoms, you must follow the home isolation instructions below. These steps will help prevent the disease from spreading to others in your household and community. You should also follow these instructions if you have any symptoms of COVID-19, even if you have not been diagnosed. The symptoms of COVID-19 may include fever (a measured temperature above 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit, or a feeling of feverishness), 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 or vomiting, or diarrhea.

Cooperate with Public Health

You must report your close contacts to the Department of Public Health (DPH) so that these individuals can be given additional guidance and monitored for symptoms. A “close contact” is anyone who was within 6 feet of you for 15 minutes or more, starting 2 days before your symptoms began, or, if you tested positive for COVID-19 but have experienced no symptoms, starting 2 days before you had the test. A DPH contact tracer will contact you to collect this information. In the meantime, you should notify your close contacts of your illness and inform them that they will be contacted by DPH. More information for your close contacts can be found here: <https://dph.georgia.gov/contact>.

Stay home except to get medical care

You must not go outside your home unless you need medical care or in the event of an emergency, such as a fire. Do not go to work, school, or public areas, and do not use public transportation, Uber/Lyft, or taxis. If you are seeking medical care, you must call ahead to alert the healthcare provider that you have or may have COVID-19.

Separate yourself from other people and animals in your home

As much as possible, you should stay in a different room from other people in your home. You should use a separate bathroom, if available. The CDC currently recommends keeping 6 feet between yourself and others. Prohibit visitors to your home as much as possible.

Wear a face covering

You should wear a face covering (this can be a cloth, such as a bandanna or scarf, that covers your nose and mouth) when you are around other people (e.g., sharing a room or vehicle), pets, and before you enter a healthcare provider’s office. If you are not able to wear a face covering (for example, because it causes trouble breathing), then people who live with you should not stay in the same room with you, or they should wear a face covering if they enter your room. The CDC has provided the following guidance on face coverings: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>.

¹ Please check the DPH website for updates, as these guidelines may change based on CDC recommendations. Visit www.dph.ga.gov, scroll down to “COVID-19 in Georgia,” and click on “Administrative Order for Public Health Control Measures.” The updated Isolation Protocol is an embedded link at the end of the document.

Appropriate hygiene

Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If handwashing with soap is not possible, use alcohol-based sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol to thoroughly cover all surfaces of your hands, then rub until they feel dry. Avoid touching your mouth, eyes, or nose with unwashed hands. If you cough or sneeze, do so into your elbow or use a tissue to cover your mouth.

Avoid sharing household items

You should not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, bedding, or other items with other people in your home. After using these items, you should wash them thoroughly with soap and water.

Clean and disinfect “high-touch” surfaces frequently

If surfaces are dirty, clean them with a detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection. For disinfection, diluted household bleach solutions, alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol, and most common EPA-registered household disinfectants should be effective. Labels contain instructions for safe and effective use of the cleaning product, including precautions you should take when applying the product, such as wearing gloves and making sure you have good ventilation during use of the product.

Monitor your symptoms

If you develop worsening symptoms, you should seek prompt medical attention. You must call your healthcare provider before seeking care and tell them that you have been diagnosed with COVID-19. You must wear a face covering, if possible, before entering the healthcare facility to protect other patients and staff from being exposed.

If you have an emergency, call 911. You must notify emergency services that you have COVID-19. Put on a face covering, if possible, before emergency services arrive. Emergency warning signs for COVID-19 may include trouble breathing, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion, inability to wake or stay awake, or bluish lips or face.

Discontinuing home isolation

When you can discontinue isolation depends on your symptoms and on other health factors:

(1) If you had a mild or moderate case of COVID-19² and you are not severely immunocompromised, then you may discontinue isolation when at least 10 days have passed since your symptoms first appeared, and at least 24 hours have passed since your last fever without the use of fever-reducing drugs, and your symptoms have improved (e.g., cough, shortness of breath.)

(2) If you had a severe or critical case of COVID-19³ or you are severely immunocompromised, then you may discontinue isolation when at least 20 days have passed since your symptoms first appeared, and at least 24 hours have passed since your last fever without the use of fever-reducing drugs, and your symptoms have improved (e.g., cough, shortness of breath.)

² A “mild case of COVID-19” means you had any of the symptoms of COVID-19 (e.g., fever, cough, sore throat, malaise, headache, muscle pain) without shortness of breath, dyspnea, or abnormal chest imaging. A “moderate case of COVID-19” means the doctors determined that you had evidence of lower respiratory disease, or your oxygen saturation was abnormally low.

³ A “severe case of COVID-19” means the doctors determined that your respiratory frequency and arterial partial pressure of oxygen to fraction of inspired oxygen were abnormally low. A “critical case of COVID-19” means you were hospitalized for shortness of breath, pneumonia, low oxygen levels, respiratory failure, septic shock, or multiple organ failure.

(3) *If you were diagnosed with COVID-19 but never developed any symptoms (i.e., you were asymptomatic), then*

(i) *If you are not severely immunocompromised, you may discontinue isolation when at least ten days have passed since your positive laboratory test and you still show no symptoms.*

(ii) *If you are severely immunocompromised, you may discontinue isolation when at least twenty days have passed since your positive laboratory test and you still show no symptoms.*

CDC guidance: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-prevent-spread.html>

Contact information for the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH): 1-866-PUB-HLTH (782-4584)