Frequently Asked Questions

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Introduction

The Chester County Health Department is taking steps to protect the health of our county by making recommendations that are meant to slow the spread of novel coronavirus (COVID-19) and reduce the number of people infected.

We understand these actions will have a tremendous impact on the lives of people in our county. The Health Department is making these recommendations based on the best information we have to protect the public's health at this time.

This guidance will be updated as the situation develops.

How does COVID-19 spread?

The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).

It is passed through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.

It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

Close contact is defined as:
- being within approximately 6 feet (2 meters) of a COVID-19 case for a prolonged period of time; close contact can occur while caring for, living with, visiting, or sharing a waiting area or room with a COVID-19 case
- OR –
- having direct contact with infectious secretions of a COVID-19 case (e.g., being coughed on)

What is community spread?

Community spread means that people in the community are testing positive for COVID-19 and they are unsure of how or where they may have become infected (they do not have travel history or known contact with a confirmed case).
**What does community spread mean for my community?**

Everyone should continue to follow Governor Wolf’s Stay at Home Order, continue to practice social distancing, and only go out for essential errands. Governor Wolf and the CDC also recommend individuals where cloth/fabric masks when running essential errands.

**Can someone spread the virus without being sick?**

Yes. People are thought to be most contagious when they are showing signs and symptoms (symptomatic); however, there is increasing research that suggests individuals without symptoms can transmit the virus to others. This could include people who have coronavirus and lack symptoms (“asymptomatic”) or people who have coronavirus and do not have symptoms yet (“pre-symptomatic”). That means the virus can spread between people interacting in close proximity—for example, speaking, coughing, or sneezing—even if those people are not exhibiting symptoms.

**Why do I need to wear a facemask now?**

With recent studies showing asymptomatic and pre-symptomatic individuals may be able to transmit the virus, CDC recommends wearing cloth/fabric face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain (e.g., grocery stores and pharmacies).

Homemade masks limit the spread of droplets in the air. They can be effective in prevent the spread of respiratory illnesses, as long as you are also doing other preventive measures like social distancing, handwashing, and avoiding touching your face.

**How do I make a homemade mask?**

You can use fabric or cloth to make homemade masks. The masks should fit snug to the bridge of your nose. Make out of two layers of tightly woven 100% cotton fabric. Visit the Chester County Health Department website, under “Homemade Mask Guidance” for more information about homemade masks.


**When and how do I clean my fabric mask?**

Masks should be washed after every use, using hot water and regular detergent. Ensure it is completely dry before using it again.
Do we have to wear facemasks 24/7?

No. You should wear a facemask when going out in public places.

If someone in your household is sick with COVID-19 or has been exposed to COVID-19 it is recommended that everyone wears a facemask and maintains as much distance as possible from person who is sick.

Do I have to put masks on my young kids?

If your child is able to tolerate wearing a mask, it is recommended to put a mask on the child when going to public places. If your child is unable to wear a mask, or is too young, try not to run essential errands with the child.

Cloth face coverings should not be placed on young children younger than 2 years of age, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the cover without assistance.

Am I safe to resume normal activities if I am wearing a mask?

No, it is not safe to resume normal activities. The mask is intended for you to keep your germs to yourself. The mask will not protect you from someone else’s germs. It is important to continue to social distance and only go out for essential errands.

I had/was exposed to COVID-19, and am still in isolation/quarantine, can I go back to work with a mask?

You cannot go back to work until you have finished your isolation/quarantine period as outlined under “When can I stop quarantine or isolation?” on page __.

Please contact your employer before returning to work.

How long does the virus live on surfaces?

Current evidence suggests that novel coronavirus may remain viable for hours to days on surfaces made from a variety of materials.
The CDC reports that it may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

**Who is affected most by COVID-19 in PA?**

The case counts across the US are rapidly changing. Visit the PA Department of Health’s website for the most up to date data on Coronavirus cases in PA.

https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx

**Should I be tested for COVID-19?**

If you develop symptoms such as fever, cough, and/or difficulty breathing, and have been in close contact with a person known to have COVID-19 or have recently traveled from an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19, stay home and call your healthcare provider. Older patients and individuals who have severe underlying medical conditions or are immunocompromised should contact their healthcare provider early, even if their illness is mild. If you have severe symptoms, such as persistent pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion, or bluish lips or face, contact your healthcare provider or emergency room and seek care immediately. Your healthcare provider will determine if you have signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and whether you should be tested.

**Where do I get tested for COVID-19?**

The Health Department does not conduct testing for COVID-19. You will need to consult with your healthcare provider to determine whether you should be tested. If they determine that you need to be tested, they can refer you to a testing location.

CDC guidance says that decisions on which patients receive testing should be based on the local epidemiology of COVID-19, as well as the clinical course of illness. Healthcare providers are strongly encouraged to test for other causes of respiratory illness, including infections such as influenza.

If you are not sick enough to need emergency medical treatment, you should not go to the emergency room.
I was tested, how do I get my test results?

Please follow up with the healthcare provider who performed the test. You can identify who this provider is by looking at the lab slip.

The Health Department cannot look up test results.

If your test is positive, the Health Department will be in contact with you via phone.

What’s the difference between self-monitoring, quarantine, and isolation?

Self-monitoring – people are monitoring themselves for fever by taking their temperatures twice a day and remaining alert for cough or difficulty breathing. If they feel feverish or develop measured fever, cough, or difficulty breathing during the self-monitoring period, they should self-isolate, limit contact with others, and seek advice by telephone from a healthcare provider or their local health department to determine whether medical evaluation is needed.

Quarantine – A person has been exposed to COVID-19, is not symptomatic, but is at home to see if the person becomes sick and limit the potential community exposure.

Isolation – A person sick with COVID-19 is separated from people who are not sick to avoid spreading illness.

When can I stop quarantine or isolation?

1. **For People with COVID-19 Under Home Isolation:**
   If you have COVID-19 and are isolated at home you may discontinue home isolation under the following conditions:
   - At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since your fever went away without the use of fever-reducing medication
   - **AND** improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath)
   - **AND** At least 7 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.

2. **For Healthcare Providers (HCP) Diagnosed with COVID-19:**
   HCP MUST be excluded from work until:
   - At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since your fever went away without the use of fever-reducing medication
   - **AND** improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath)
AND At least 7 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.

After returning to work, HCP should:

- Wear a facemask at all times while in the healthcare facility until all symptoms are completely resolved or until 14 days after illness onset, whichever is longer.
- Be restricted from contact with severely immunocompromised patients (e.g., transplant, hematology-oncology) until 14 days after illness onset.
- Adhere to hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene, and cough etiquette in CDC’s interim infection control guidance (e.g., cover nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing, dispose of tissues in waste receptacles).
- Self-monitor for symptoms, and seek re-evaluation from occupational health/primary care provider and do not work if symptoms recur or worsen.

3. **For Household Contacts of Persons with COVID-19:**
   Because exposure is considered to be ongoing within the house, household contacts of persons with COVID-19 must be quarantined for 14 days after the person who tested positive has been released from isolation (see #1 above). This means that household contacts will need to remain at home longer than the person who tested positive.

4. **For Non-Household Contacts of Persons with COVID-19:**
   People who had close contact with a person with COVID-19 must be quarantined for 14 days from the date of last contact with the person with COVID-19.

**What is the recommendation for individuals with chronic health conditions or weakened immune systems?**

Individuals with chronic health conditions and/or weakened immune systems are at higher risk for COVID-19. The Chester County Health Department strongly recommends these individuals should stay home and away from large groups of people as much as possible. This includes public places with lots of people and large gatherings where there will be close contact with others such as concert venues, conventions, sporting events, festivals, and crowded social gatherings. If in doubt, individuals should consult their healthcare provider to decide the best course of action.

**What is the recommendation for older individuals?**

Older individuals, those over 60 years of age, are at higher risk for COVID-19. The Chester County Health Department strongly recommends these individuals should stay home and away
from large groups of people as much as possible. This includes public places with lots of people and large gatherings where there will be close contact with others such as concert venues, conventions, sporting events, festivals, and crowded social gatherings. If in doubt, individuals should consult their healthcare provider to decide the best course of action.

What is social distancing?

Social distancing means to reduce close contact between people to stop or slow the spread of disease. Social distancing includes actions like closing schools and businesses, postponing large events and gatherings, limiting errands, postponing play dates and sleepovers, and staying home.

Questions about schools, businesses, travel, community gatherings, and events should review Governor Wolf’s Statewide Mitigation Plan.

Visit https://www.pa.gov/guides/responding-to-covid-19 and scroll down to “Statewide Mitigation” to review Governor Wolf’s guidance for businesses, schools, and care facilities.

How do I report non-compliant businesses?

The Chester County Health Department can only enforce food-related establishments. To report non-compliant food-establistments, visit the Chester County Health Department’s website and click on the “Report Non-Compliant Food Establishments”. www.chesco.org/coronavirus

To report businesses other than food-establishments, contact your local law enforcement agency’s non-emergency number.

What should my school/organization do about cleaning?

Cleaning guidance and disinfectant can be found at Chester County Health Department’s COVID-19 website under the cleaning and hygiene section at: https://chesco.org/coronavirus

Reminder: Personal precautions for the community

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Cover your cough/sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash and wash your hands.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
• Stay home when you are sick, except to get medical care.
• Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If you cannot wash your hands, use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
• Wash your hands after touching objects that other people may frequently touch, such as remotes, phones, door knobs, or money.
Guidance for Self-Monitoring Individuals at Home

This guidance is provided to individuals who have been asked to self-monitor, or who voluntarily choose, to self-monitor signs and symptoms for the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) including individuals who:

- believe they have been exposed to novel coronavirus, with or without mild illness
- have confirmed or suspected COVID-19 infection and do not need to be hospitalized
- have confirmed COVID-19 infection who were hospitalized and determined to be medically stable to return home.

If symptoms worsen and you feel that you need medical attention, please contact your healthcare provider or call 9-1-1 for an emergency. Call ahead and tell them about your symptoms and potential exposure.

Stay at Home

- People who are not sick enough to need hospitalization can be cared for at home. Please remain at home for **14 days**.
- **DO NOT:**
  - leave your home except to seek emergency medical care
  - go to work, school, or public places
  - use public transportation, ride-sharing, or taxis.

- If you need to seek medical attention for an emergency call 9-1-1 and let them know of your potential exposure to COVID-19.
- Utilize delivery services or ask a neighbor/friend to help with grocery or prescription pickup. There is no identified risk to someone who may retrieve goods for you and leave them on your doorstep. See below for recommendations.

Practice Social Distancing

- Maintain a 6 foot distance from others as much as possible.
- As much as possible, you should stay in a specific room and avoid contact with other people in your home.
- Use a separate bathroom, if available.
In the event that you need to be around other people and are experiencing symptoms, wearing a facemask is helpful for keeping your germs away from others.

Clean any surfaces and objects used by others in the household frequently, using regular cleaning sprays or wipes.

**Cover Your Coughs and Sneezes**

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, or cough into your bent elbow if a tissue is not available.
- Throw used tissues in a lined trash can and wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- If soap and water are unavailable, clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol, covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands, and wash your hands after touching your face.

**Avoid Sharing Personal Household Items**

- Do not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, or bedding with other people in your home.
- Thoroughly wash all personal household items you use with soap and water.

**Discontinuing Self-Monitoring at Home**

- After 14 days, if you have no symptoms, you may return to your normal daily activities. If you continue to have symptoms, continue to self-isolate.

Please visit the Health Department website for more information at: https://chesco.org/coronavirus
Resources for Self-Monitoring Individuals

Please utilize delivery services or ask a neighbor/friend to help with grocery or prescription pickup. There is no identified risk to someone who may retrieve goods for you and leave them on your doorstep. Possible vendors:

- **Prepared Food**
  - GrubHub – [www.grubhub.com](http://www.grubhub.com)
  - Postmates – [www.postmates.com](http://www.postmates.com)
  - UberEats – [www.ubereats.com](http://www.ubereats.com)
  - DoorDash – [www.doordash.com](http://www.doordash.com)
  - Cuisine to Go – [www.cuisinetogo.net](http://www.cuisinetogo.net)

- **Grocery**
  - Amazon/Whole Foods – [amazon.com/wholefoods](http://amazon.com/wholefoods)
  - Giant (through Peapod)
  - Walmart (curbside pickup or delivery)
  - Target (through Shipt service)
  - Instacart – [www.instacart.com](http://www.instacart.com)
  - GoPuff – [www.gopuff.com](http://www.gopuff.com)

- **Pharmacy**
  - CVS
  - Walgreens
  - Regional Pharmacy – [regionalrx.com](http://regionalrx.com)
  - NowRX – [nowrx.com](http://nowrx.com)
  - Express Scripts – [express-scripts.com](http://express-scripts.com)