

What should I do if I suspect that I may have contracted COVID-19?

1. Close contacts of a person with confirmed coronavirus disease, who do not have any symptoms and have been asked to self-isolate / self-quarantine

What does being a “close contact” mean?

The NICD classifies a “close contact” as follows:

“You have been in close contact with someone who has confirmed coronavirus disease, but you do not have any symptoms yourself. Close contact means that you had face-to-face contact within 1 meter, or were in a closed space for more than 15 minutes with a person with COVID-19. This contact happened while the person with COVID-19 was still ‘infectious’, i.e. from two days before to 14 days after their symptoms began. For example, you may be someone who:

- Lives in the same household as a person with COVID-19
- Works closely in the same environment as a person with COVID-19 Sat in the same classroom as a person with COVID-19
- Attended the same gathering as a person with COVID-19
- Provided direct care for a person with COVID-19 without using the proper personal protective equipment
- Sat within two seats (1 meter) in any direction of a person with COVID-19 case in any kind of vehicle including buses, minibus taxis, etc.”

Once this person has been diagnosed with coronavirus disease, they would be required to provide the names and details of all other persons they have been in contact with. Remind them to include you on the list.

Who will be in touch with me from the government or National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD)?

The person with COVID-19, with whom you were in close contact, made a list of all the people he/she had close contact with from two days before they became ill. You may therefore be called, visited at home or advised by government officials, community health workers and/or the NICD.

The purpose of this contact is to assist you to self-quarantine at home for 14 days after your last contact and to monitor you for symptoms. The number of times you are contacted by government officials or the NICD is subject to change.

Will I be tested for coronavirus disease as a close contact?

You will only have a laboratory test performed if you develop symptoms within 14 days of your last close contact with a person with COVID-19 who is considered infectious, i.e. able to transmit infection.

What does home quarantine mean?

Stay at home. Do not go to work, school, or any public areas.



Remember

You have to contact your employer to report your situation and to let them know that you cannot come to work.

Do not use any public transport (including buses, minibus taxis and taxi cabs). Do not travel.

You should cancel all your routine medical and dental appointments.

If possible, you should not even go out to buy food, medicines or other essentials. You should ask friends or relatives to help you to buy groceries and essentials. If you have access to the internet, you can order your shopping or medications online, but tell delivery drivers to leave any items for collection outside your house. Delivery drivers should not come into your house at all.

You should not go outside to exercise, unless you can maintain a safe distance from others in an outdoor space.

You should not have any visitors in your home during your quarantine period. Do keep in touch with your relatives, friends and colleagues over the phone, internet or by using social media.

If you live with other people, as far as possible, you should stay in a separate room and away from other people in your household. If a separate room is not possible, try to keep to one area of your home, at least two meters (three steps) away from other people. You and the other people in your house should use all the prevention techniques described in this training.

If you develop any of the COVID-19 symptoms from two to 14 days after your close contact with a person with COVID-19, you should immediately contact your healthcare provider.

You can end your home quarantine 14 days after your last contact with a person with COVID-19 if you do not display any symptoms.

2. What to do if I experience COVID-19 symptoms and think I may have corona disease

The process

The exact testing process may be different in different provinces and between the public- and private-sectors.

In general, you need to first contact your healthcare provider. This may be your General Practitioner (GP) or your local clinic/hospital. You should phone ahead to your healthcare provider, if possible, and find out what the exact process is for you to be tested.

If you cannot get hold of your healthcare provider, you should try to call your nearest testing laboratory for information.

If you do not need emergency medical care, you should not visit a hospital emergency unit for testing.

Some hospitals or GPs may refer you to an off-site testing facility. The National Health Laboratory Service (NHLS) and some private laboratories offer testing at mobile facilities.

You will need to pay for tests done at private laboratories. Contact your medical aid to clarify whether they will pay / partially pay for any private tests, prior to being tested.

**Remember**

You have to contact your employer to report your situation, to let them know that you cannot come to work and that you have started the testing process.

What specimens will be collected from me and what do the test results mean?

The most commonly collected specimen is a swab collected through your nose. If you have a wet cough, you may be asked to produce a sputum (spit) specimen into a jar for testing.

This specimen will be sent to a pathology laboratory for analysis. The laboratory will test your specimen for COVID-19 genetic material.

The test will be reported as either positive or negative.

If your test is reported as positive, this means that genetic material from the coronavirus was found in your specimen and you have confirmed coronavirus disease. Further instruction (e.g. to home quarantine) will be provided.

What should I do while I wait for my test results?

Test results can take anything from a couple of hours to a couple of days.

Test results will typically be sent to your healthcare practitioner. If you have agreed to be contacted with your test results, your test results may be sent directly to you.

While you wait for your results, you are advised to self-quarantine at home and to follow all the COVID-19 prevention measures in this course.