



## RECOMMENDED MINIMUM QUARANTINE TIMEFRAMES

**Updated: March 23, 2021**

### Background:

The incubation period of SARS-CoV-2 is between 2-14 days (median incubation is about 5 days). It is for this reason that CDC and NJDOH continue to recommend a 14-day quarantine period. This quarantine period for persons who might have been exposed to COVID-19 has proven to be an effective strategy to prevent further transmission.

For some individuals, however, a 14-day quarantine may impose a significant economic or other hardship in some circumstances. This may dissuade individuals from responding to contact tracer outreach or result in non-compliance with quarantine of any length.

On 12/2/20, CDC released [guidance](#) with options to shorten the quarantine time period, which, while it risks being less effective than the currently recommended 14-day quarantine, it may reduce the burden and increase willingness to adhere to public health recommendations.

**NEW! CDC recommends that persons who clinically recovered from COVID-19 in the past 3 months and those who are fully vaccinated (defined as  $\geq 2$  weeks following receipt of the second dose in a 2-dose series, or  $\geq 2$  weeks following receipt of one dose of a single-dose vaccine) do NOT need to quarantine after having close contact with someone with COVID-19, as long as they remain asymptomatic (see exceptions for high-risk congregate care settings).** CDC takes a more conservative approach for quarantine after travel, recommending testing and quarantine for all travelers. This more conservative approach for travelers aims to prevent the spread of variant strains from one area to another and also considers an increased transmission risk associated with traveling, particularly related to social mixing at travel hubs.

The NJDOH COVID-19 Activity Level Index Report (CALI) provides information on COVID-19 transmission risk by region and statewide, and characterizes risk as Very High (red), High (orange), moderate (yellow), or low (green): <https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/statistics/covid/>. The following minimum quarantine recommendations are based on the level of COVID-19 transmission.

### NJDOH Recommendations:

High-Risk Congregate Care Settings: High-risk congregate care settings are those that care for persons at high risk for severe complications (e.g., long-term care and assisted living facilities, group homes, correctional facilities).

- **Residents** of high-risk congregate care settings need to continue to quarantine for 14-days, regardless of vaccination status and at all COVID-19 transmission risk levels, following prolonged close contact (within 6 feet for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period) with a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19. Asymptomatic residents who have clinically

recovered from COVID-19 in the prior 3 months do NOT need to quarantine after a close contact exposure but IS recommended for a close contact exposure > 3 months from the prior infection.

- Persons **who work** in high-risk congregate settings need to continue to quarantine for 14-days, following prolonged close contact (within 6 feet for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period) with a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 unless they remain asymptomatic AND:
  - Persons are fully vaccinated, OR
  - Persons have clinically recovered from COVID-19 in the past 3 months, OR
  - Staffing shortages would cause serious harm or danger to public health or safety (Refer to CDC *Strategies to Mitigate Healthcare Personnel Staffing Shortages*)<sup>1</sup>.

Testing following an exposure and through routine workplace screening programs (if present) is still recommended, even if fully vaccinated. Refer to NJDOH *Guidance for COVID-19 Diagnosed and/or Exposed Healthcare Personnel* for more information.

#### Community Settings and Individuals:

**Outside of high-risk congregate settings, following prolonged close contact (within 6 feet for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period) with someone with COVID-19, persons should quarantine UNLESS:**

- Individuals are fully vaccinated , OR
- Individuals have clinically recovered from COVID-19 in the past 3 months.

The recommended minimum timeframes for quarantine vary by the level of community transmission.

- When there is substantial COVID-19 community spread, defined as Very High (red) or High (orange) on the CALI report (by region), NJDOH recommends quarantine for 14 days *where feasible* to reduce the risk of spread of COVID-19 and particularly for persons who live with or care for persons at high risk of severe complications for COVID-19 (older adults, persons with underlying conditions or obesity, and pregnant women).
- When COVID-19 transmission risk is Moderate (yellow) or Low (green) on the CALI report (by region), while a 14-day quarantine is preferred, CDC's recommended shortened quarantine timeframes are acceptable alternatives.

---

<sup>1</sup> Refer to "Updated Healthcare Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations in Response to COVID-19 Vaccination" for special considerations for immunocompromised persons.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/infection-control-after-vaccination.html>

**Recommended Minimum Quarantine Timeframes by COVID-19 Regional Transmission Risk Level (CALI Score)<sup>2</sup>**

Low Risk	Moderate Risk	High Risk	Very High Risk
<i>14 days is always preferred as the best way to prevent COVID-19 transmission.</i>			
10 days without testing  OR  7 days with negative test results collected at 5-7 days	10 days without testing  OR  7 days with negative test results collected at 5-7 days	14 days for group settings and organized activities  14 days for individuals unless it causes <u>significant economic or other hardship</u>  <b>ONLY IF 14 days is <u>not feasible</u>, follow</b>  10 days without testing  OR  7 days with negative test results collected at 5-7 days	14 days for group settings and organized activities  14 days for individuals unless it causes <u>significant economic or other hardship</u>  <b>ONLY IF 14 days is <u>not feasible</u>, follow</b>  10 days without testing  OR  7 days with negative test results collected at 5-7 days

- Community Settings & Organized Activities:*** School and childcare administrators, employers, and individuals or entities having control over organized groups or activities (e.g., sports teams) should have a policy that defines the quarantine timeframes for their population (staff, students, athletes, etc.)<sup>3</sup>. For organized activities that take place in different regions of the state (e.g., sports team), the “home region” risk level where the group is primarily located can be used.
- Individuals:*** It is preferred that individuals not working at or attending group activities quarantine for 14 days. This is the safest way to protect family, friends, and community members, particularly if individuals will be in contact with persons at high risk for severe COVID-19 illness or if the COVID-19 transmission risk is High or Very High (orange or red CALI score). If a 14-day quarantine would pose a significant economic or other hardship<sup>4</sup>, if it will result in non-compliance with quarantine, or if the COVID-19 transmission risk is Moderate or Low (yellow or green CALI score), the CDC recommended shortened timeframes are acceptable. It is the

<sup>2</sup> Excludes high-risk congregate care settings (e.g., long-term care and assisted living facilities, group homes, correctional facilities)

<sup>3</sup> If the quarantine period started when COVID-19 transmission risk is High or Very High, the 14 days should be completed even if the transmission risk changes to Moderate or Low during those 14 days.

<sup>4</sup> Examples of significant hardship include loss of income; inability to obtain food, medication or other essential items; inability to provide family members with essential transportation or other care services.

individual's personal responsibility to determine if they can quarantine for 14-days, but they should comply with the minimum alternative timeframes. *Note: individuals who work at or attend group activities in community settings should refer to those organization's policies.*

**Summary of Quarantine Timeframes if Identified as a Close Contact of Someone with COVID-19**

- 14-day quarantine is preferred for all individuals and groups where feasible
- Acceptable Alternative Quarantine Timeframes (when COVID-19 transmission risk is Moderate or Low):
  - After Day 10 without testing and if no symptoms have been reported during daily monitoring, OR
  - After Day 7 if the individual tests negative with a viral test (molecular-PCR or antigen) between day 5-7 and if no symptoms were reported during daily monitoring.

*Note: The specimen must be collected between day 5-7 (not earlier than day 5), but quarantine cannot be discontinued earlier than after Day 7. The person should remain in quarantine until the results are received and are negative. If test results are delayed, quarantine should be continued until after Day 10.*

Travel:

All travelers (including essential workers such as healthcare personnel) should continue to follow all New Jersey and CDC travel recommendations, including the recommendations for testing pre- and post-travel and for quarantine post-travel, **INCLUDING:**

- Individuals who are fully vaccinated, OR
- Persons who clinically recovered from COVID-19 in the past 3 months.

A more conservative approach is taken regarding travel due to the concern of travelers spreading variant virus strains from one area to another. Some variant strains may be more transmissible and could result in an increase in the number of cases, more strain on health care resources and possibly an increase in hospitalizations and deaths. Other variants may be of concern if they cause more severe illness, are not detectable with existing tests, if they don't respond to therapeutics, or if they impact on the effectiveness of vaccines. For all of these reasons, non-essential travel is discouraged and if travel is necessary, testing and quarantine are recommended.

### Summary of Travel Recommendations (all travelers)

If you must travel, take steps to protect yourself and others:

- If you are eligible, get fully vaccinated for COVID-19.
- Before you travel, get tested with a viral test 1-3 days before your trip.
- Wear a mask over your nose and mouth when in public.
- Avoid crowds and stay at least 6 feet/2 meters (about 2 arm lengths) from anyone who did not travel with you.
- Get tested 3-5 days after your trip and stay home and self-quarantine for a full 7 days after travel, even if your test is negative. If you don't get tested, stay home and self-quarantine for 10 days after travel.

**CDC Travel Recommendations:** CDC Travel during COVID-19: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/travel-during-covid19.html>

**NJ Travel Advisory:** <https://covid19.nj.gov/faqs/nj-information/travel-and-transportation/are-there-travel-restrictions-to-or-from-new-jersey>

### Additional considerations:

- Quarantine can be shortened only **if persons remain asymptomatic** throughout the shortened quarantine period; if they **continue to monitor for symptoms** through Day 14; and if they are counseled to follow COVID-19 prevention recommendations (e.g., social distancing, mask use, hand hygiene, cleaning and disinfection, avoiding crowds) through Day 14.
- Persons under quarantine should be advised that if they develop symptoms of COVID-19, they should immediately self-isolate and contact the local health department (LHD) [www.localhealth.nj.gov](http://www.localhealth.nj.gov) and their healthcare provider to report this change in clinical status.
- If an outbreak is reported in a community setting, contacts must quarantine for the full 14 days.
- Clinically Recovered from COVID-19 within 3 months: Persons who tested positive for COVID-19 (viral test), clinically recovered from COVID-19 and then have close contact with someone with COVID-19 within 3 months do not need to be quarantined or tested after a close contact with someone with COVID-19. However, persons who have close contact with someone with COVID-19 more than 3 months after their initial infection should quarantine.
- Fully Vaccinated Persons: If identified as a close contact of someone with COVID-19, a fully vaccinated person does not need to quarantine as long as they remain asymptomatic. Although the risk that fully vaccinated people could become infected with COVID-19 is low, if symptoms develop, they should isolate and seek medical evaluation for COVID-19, which may include

testing. Fully vaccinated means  $\geq 2$  weeks following receipt of the second dose in a 2-dose series, or  $\geq 2$  weeks following receipt of one dose of a single-dose vaccine.

#### References and Resources:

- CDC Options to Reduce Quarantine for Contacts of Persons with SARS-CoV-2 Infection Using Symptom Monitoring and Diagnostic Testing, 12/2/20: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/more/scientific-brief-options-to-reduce-quarantine.html>
- CDC Public Health Recommendations for Fully Vaccinated People: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated-guidance.html>
- Updated Healthcare Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations in Response to COVID-19 Vaccination <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/infection-control-after-vaccination.html>
- CDC Strategies to Mitigate Healthcare Personnel Staffing Shortages: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/mitigating-staff-shortages.html>
- CDC Travel during COVID-19: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/travel-during-covid19.html>
- New Jersey COVID-19 Testing Site Finder: <https://covid19.nj.gov/pages/testing#test-sites>
- NJDOH COVID-19 Activity Level Index Report (CALI Report): <https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/statistics/covid/>
- NJDOH Guidance for COVID-19 Diagnosed and/or Exposed Healthcare Personnel: [https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/documents/topics/NCOV/Guidance\\_for\\_COVID19\\_Diagnosed\\_and\\_or\\_Exposed\\_HCP.pdf](https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/documents/topics/NCOV/Guidance_for_COVID19_Diagnosed_and_or_Exposed_HCP.pdf)
- NJ Travel Advisory: <https://covid19.nj.gov/faqs/nj-information/travel-and-transportation/are-there-travel-restrictions-to-or-from-new-jersey>