Erie County Department of Health
Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

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What to do if you test positive for COVID-19

Updated as of Aug. 11, 2022
For additional information or questions, call 814-451-6700 option 2

If you test positive for COVID-19
Regardless of vaccination status, **you should isolate from others when you have COVID-19**. **You should also isolate if you are sick and suspect that you have COVID-19 but do not yet have test results.** If your results are positive, follow the full isolation recommendations below. If your results are negative, you can end your isolation.

If you had no symptoms:
- Day 0 is the day you were tested (not the day you received your positive test result)
- Day 1 is the first full day following the day you were tested
- If you develop symptoms within 10 days of when you were tested, the clock restarts at day 0 on the day of symptom onset

If you had symptoms:
- Day 0 of isolation is the day of symptom onset, regardless of when you tested positive
- Day 1 is the first full day after the day your symptoms started

Stay home for at least 5 days and isolate from others in your home. You are likely most infectious during these first 5 days.
- Wear a high-quality mask if you must be around others at home and in public.
- Do not go places where you are unable to wear a mask, including travel and public transportation settings.
- Stay home and separate from others as much as possible. Use a separate bathroom, if possible.
- Take steps to improve ventilation at home, if possible.
- Don't share personal household items, like cups, towels, and utensils.
- Monitor your symptoms. If you have an emergency warning sign (like trouble breathing), seek emergency medical care immediately.

End isolation based on how serious your COVID-19 symptoms were.
- If you had no symptoms: You may end isolation after day 5.
- If you had symptoms: You may end isolation after day 5 if:
  - You are fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medication)
  - Your symptoms are improving

If you still have fever or your other symptoms have not improved, continue to isolate until they improve.

If you had moderate illness (if you experienced shortness of breath or had difficulty breathing), or severe illness (you were hospitalized) due to COVID-19-, or you have a weakened immune system, you need to isolate through day 10.

If you had severe illness or have a weakened immune system, consult your doctor before ending isolation. Ending isolation without a viral test may not be an option for you.

If you are unsure if your symptoms are moderate or severe or if you have a weakened immune system, talk to a healthcare provider for further guidance.

After you have ended isolation, when you are feeling better (no fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and symptoms improving),
- Wear your mask through day 10.

OR
- If you have access to antigen tests, you should consider using them. With two sequential negative tests 48 hours apart, you may remove your mask sooner than day 10.

Note: If your COVID symptoms worsen after ending isolation, restart your isolation at day 0.