

UPDATE: Public Health Recommendations Given New Evidence on the SARS-CoV-2 Delta Variant

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| TO: | Health Alert Network |
| FROM: | Alison V. Beam, JD, Acting Secretary of Health |
| SUBJECT: | Public Health Recommendations Given New Evidence on the SARS-CoV-2 Delta Variant |
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This transmission is a “Health Update,” provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

HOSPITALS: PLEASE SHARE WITH ALL MEDICAL, PEDIATRIC, NURSING AND LABORATORY STAFF IN YOUR HOSPITAL; **EMS COUNCILS:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE; **FQHCs:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE; **LOCAL HEALTH JURISDICTIONS:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE; **PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE TO YOUR MEMBERSHIP; **LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES:** PLEASE SHARE WITH ALL MEDICAL, INFECTION CONTROL, AND NURSING STAFF IN YOUR FACILITY

- This guidance replaces PA-HAN-583 and provides clarification on quarantine recommendations for persons exposed to SARS-CoV-2.
- Fully vaccinated people who have had a known exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 should be tested **5-7** days after exposure, and to wear a mask in public indoor settings for 14 days or until they receive a negative test.
- Individuals can be considered fully vaccinated ≥ 2 weeks after the receipt of the last dose if they have received **any combination** of two doses of an FDA approved COVID-19 two-dose series.
- Testing recommendations for fully vaccinated individuals who have ongoing exposure to someone with COVID-19 are now available.
- If you have questions about this guidance, please call your local health department or **1-877-PA-HEALTH (1-877-724-3258)**.

Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) provides this guidance based on available information about COVID-19 and is subject to change.

On October 15, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) updated their [recommendations](#) for individuals who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 given new evidence on the B.1.617.2. (Delta) variant currently circulating in the United States. Based on these updated recommendations, the Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) is updating guidance for individuals exposed to COVID-19. This guidance, which replaces [PA-HAN-583](#), provides clarification on quarantine guidance and public health mitigation strategies (e.g., masking, social distancing) based on vaccination status.

This guidance applies to COVID-19 vaccines currently authorized for emergency use by the [U.S. Food and Drug Administration \(FDA\)](#), and to COVID-19 vaccines that have been authorized for emergency use by the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#).

Guidance for fully vaccinated individuals in healthcare settings can be found in the [updated healthcare infection prevention and control recommendations](#).

Currently authorized vaccines in the United States are highly effective at protecting vaccinated people against symptomatic and severe COVID-19. Fully vaccinated people are less likely to become infected and, if infected, to develop symptoms of COVID-19. They are at substantially reduced risk of severe illness and death from COVID-19 compared with unvaccinated people.

Updated Information on Interpreting Vaccination Records

In general, people are considered fully vaccinated:

- 2 weeks after their second dose in a 2-dose series, such as the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccines, or;
- 2 weeks after a single-dose vaccine, such as Johnson & Johnson's Janssen vaccine

For the purposes of interpretation of vaccination records, individuals can be considered fully vaccinated ≥ 2 weeks after receipt of the last dose if they have received:

- Any single dose of an FDA approved/authorized or WHO emergency use listed (EUL) approved single-dose series (i.e., Janssen), or;
- Any combination of two doses of an FDA approved/authorized or WHO EUL COVID-19 two-dose series (e.g., Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna).

For purposes of interpretation of vaccine records, the second dose in a two dose heterologous series must have been received no earlier than 17 days after the first dose.

Recommendation for Asymptomatic Vaccinated Individuals

Infections in fully vaccinated people (breakthrough infections) happen in only a small proportion of people who are fully vaccinated, even with the Delta variant. Moreover, when these infections occur among vaccinated people, they tend to be mild. However, [preliminary evidence](#) suggests that fully vaccinated people who do become infected with the Delta variant can be infectious and can spread the virus to others.

Recommendations for Masking in Areas of Substantial or High Community Transmission

Risk of SARS-CoV-2 infection, severe disease, and death is reduced for fully vaccinated people. Though they happen in only a small proportion of people who are fully vaccinated, some infections do occur among fully vaccinated people. Fully vaccinated people who do become infected with the Delta variant can transmit it to others. Therefore, fully vaccinated people can further reduce their risk of becoming infected with the Delta variant and transmitting it to others by wearing a mask in public indoor settings, particularly in [areas of substantial or high community transmission](#).

Wearing a mask in public is most important for people who are immunocompromised. [People at increased risk for severe disease](#) includes older adults and those who have certain medical conditions, such as diabetes, overweight or obesity, and heart conditions. Unvaccinated household members include:

- Adults who have not completed vaccination,
- Adults who cannot be fully vaccinated
- People who are not eligible for vaccines, including children less than 12 years of age.

Fully vaccinated people should also continue to wear a mask where required by federal, state, local, tribal, or territorial laws, rules, and regulations, including local business and workplace guidance, and in

correctional facilities, healthcare facilities, and homeless shelters. [Prevention measures, including masking at all times in public indoor settings](#), are still recommended for unvaccinated people.

Recommendations for Fully Vaccinated People with No COVID-19 Symptoms After Exposure to Someone with Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19

Fully vaccinated individuals do not need to quarantine but should be tested 5-7 days following close contact with someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 and wear a mask in public indoor settings for 14 days or until they receive a negative test result, and isolate if they test positive.

Fully vaccinated people who live in a household with someone who is immunosuppressed, at increased risk of severe disease, or unvaccinated (including children <12 years of age) should also consider masking at home for 14 days following a known exposure or until they receive a negative test result. They should isolate if they test positive.

Fully vaccinated people should monitor for [symptoms of COVID-19](#) for 14 days following an exposure regardless of negative test results.

Recommendations for Fully Vaccinated People with Ongoing Exposure to Someone with COVID-19

People who are fully vaccinated and have ongoing exposure to COVID-19 (e.g., household contact) should:

- Get tested 5-7 days after their *first* exposure. A person with COVID-19 is considered infectious starting 2 days before they develop symptoms, or 2 days before the date of their positive test if they do not have symptoms.
- Get tested again 5-7 days after the end of isolation for the person with COVID-19; i.e., a second test 5-7 days after their *last* exposure.
- Wear a mask when in contact with the person with COVID-19 throughout the infected person's isolation period.
- Wear a mask indoors in public until 14 days after the infected person's isolation period ends or until the fully vaccinated close contact receives their final test result.
- [Isolate](#) immediately if they develop [symptoms](#) of COVID-19 or test positive.

Recommendations for Asymptomatic Vaccinated Patients or Residents in Healthcare Settings

Asymptomatic vaccinated patients or residents in healthcare settings who have had close contact with someone with SARS-CoV-2 infection should refer to [PA-HAN-597](#).

Recommendations for Fully Vaccinated People with COVID-19 Symptoms

Any fully vaccinated person who experiences [symptoms consistent with COVID-19](#) should isolate themselves from others, be clinically evaluated for COVID-19, and tested for SARS-CoV-2 if indicated. The symptomatic fully vaccinated person should inform their healthcare provider of their vaccination status at the time of presentation to care.

Recommendations for Individuals Who Are Not Fully Vaccinated

Individuals who are not fully vaccinated against COVID-19 and are identified as a [close contact](#) of a COVID-19 case must quarantine. An individual is considered fully vaccinated when 2 or more weeks have passed after the receipt of the second dose in a 2-dose vaccine series, or 2 or more weeks have passed after receipt of one dose of a single-dose vaccine. Quarantine is used to separate someone who

might have been exposed to COVID-19 away from others. This individual may or may not develop illness. The most protective recommended quarantine period remains at 14 days after the date of last exposure (Day 0) to a person who is infectious with SARS-CoV-2. CDC has provided options to [shorten quarantine](#) which balances the reduced burden to the individual under quarantine against a small possibility of increasing the spread of the virus.

The following are options to shorten the 14-day quarantine:

- Quarantine can end after Day 10 without testing and if no symptoms have been reported during daily monitoring. However, it is recommended that symptom monitoring continue through Day 14.
- If diagnostic testing resources are sufficient and available, quarantine can end after Day 7 if a diagnostic specimen (i.e., RT-PCR or antigen) tests negative and if no symptoms were reported during daily monitoring.
 - The specimen must be collected and tested within 48 hours before the time of planned quarantine discontinuation (e.g., in anticipation of testing delays), but quarantine cannot be discontinued earlier than after Day 7.

In order to discontinue quarantine after Day 7, specimens must be collected on or after Day 5. Specimens collected prior to this date will not be sufficient to allow quarantine to end early. Either RT-PCR or antigen tests would be acceptable testing methods for discontinuation of quarantine.

Persons can discontinue quarantine at these time points only if the following criteria are also met:

- No clinical evidence of COVID-19 has been elicited by daily symptom monitoring during the entirety of quarantine up to the time at which quarantine is discontinued; and,
- Daily symptom monitoring continues through quarantine Day 14; and,
- Persons need to adhere strictly through Day 14 after exposure to all recommended nonpharmaceutical interventions (e.g., masking, physical distancing).
 - If any symptoms develop, they should immediately self-isolate and contact the DOH at 1-877-PA-HEALTH, their local health department, or their healthcare provider to report this change in clinical status.

Testing for the purpose of discontinuation of quarantine prior to day 10 should be considered only if it will have no impact on availability of community diagnostic testing. Testing of symptomatic persons seeking evaluation for infection must be prioritized.

Persons who have tested positive for COVID-19 within the past 3 months and recovered do not have to quarantine or get tested again as long as they do not develop new symptoms. However, masking is still recommended for unvaccinated persons. If they do become symptomatic, the person should isolate and seek testing.

If you have questions about this guidance, please call your local health department or **1-877-PA-HEALTH (1-877-724-3258)**.

Individuals interested in receiving further PA-HANs are encouraged to register at <https://han.pa.gov/>.

Categories of Health Alert messages:

Health Alert: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

This information is current as of October 25, 2021 but may be modified in the future. We will continue to post updated information regarding the most common questions about this subject.