

# Contact Tracing

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is Contact Tracing?

Kentucky is implementing Contact Tracing to help stop the spread of diseases like COVID-19 and help Kentuckians stay healthy and safe. Contact Tracing is key to safely getting back to work and school while also kickstarting the economy.

- Public Health workers reach out to individuals who have COVID-19 to assess their situation, provide helpful resources, and ask about any recent in-person contacts who may have been exposed to the disease. Instructions are provided about how to stop spreading the disease and what to do until they recover.
- Recent in-person contacts are notified that they may have been exposed to COVID-19 and are provided instructions and are connected to local resources.
- Individuals receive follow-up calls to see how they are doing and gather any new information.
- By following the instructions provided by Public Health workers, contacts help stop the spread of COVID-19 and save the lives of Kentuckians.

This is part of an existing process used by the Kentucky Department for Public Health (KDPH) and Local Health Departments. The purpose of Contact Tracing is to reduce health risks to others and protect communities from any further exposure. Resources are provided to help both individuals who have COVID-19, as well as individuals who may have been exposed to COVID-19. All information gathered by Public Health workers is private and is not released or made public.

### Why am I being asked for my information?

Following guidance from the White House, federal and state health experts, and governors across the nation, the Kentucky Department for Public Health and your Local Health Department will be conducting Contact Tracing for COVID-19. In order to protect the health and safety of our communities, you may be contacted to discuss your risk of COVID-19 exposure and provided with instructions to slow the spread of the virus.

## **Is the information I give private?**

Yes, the information you give is kept completely private and confidential. Information regarding the individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19 and the people they have recently made in-person contact with is not released or made public.

## **How did the health department get my information?**

Health care providers and testing laboratories are required to report anyone with a positive COVID-19 lab test, or someone who is highly likely to have COVID-19, to the Local Health Department.

If you came into contact recently with someone who has COVID-19, Local Health Departments received your information from them. They identified you or a place where you have been that may have potentially exposed you to COVID-19.

## **Why will I be contacted by the Kentucky Department for Public Health (KDPH) or a Local Health Department (LHD)?**

There are two reasons why you may be contacted: You have COVID-19 or you were recently around someone who has COVID-19 and you may have been exposed to the disease.

If you have COVID-19:

- A Public Health worker will ask how you are doing and see if there is anything you need to connect you with resources.
- A Public Health worker will explain what to do now that you have COVID-19.
- A Public Health worker will ask for a list of people you have recently been with in-person, so we can let them know they may have been exposed to COVID-19. Your information will be kept completely private.

If you are someone who may have been exposed:

- A Public Health worker will tell you that you were potentially exposed to COVID-19.
- A Public Health worker will ask how you are feeling and see if there is anything you need to connect you with resources.

- A Public Health worker will determine next steps to take based on any symptoms you may have.

The goal of Contact Tracing is to stop the spread of COVID-19 in the community and save the lives of Kentuckians. By following instructions provided by Public Health workers, you can help keep your loved ones and people you know from getting sick.

### **How does giving my information benefit me?**

There are many benefits. They include:

- Helping stop the spread of COVID-19 from your loved ones and your community.
- Gained access to resources you may need during this time including:
  - o How to get tested, and where.
  - o What to do if you get COVID-19.
- Get answers from a Public Health worker.

### **What will be done with the information I provide?**

Your information will be kept completely private and only used for public health purposes. We do not release confidential information to the public.

If you are a person with COVID-19, any people you name as potential contacts may be contacted and will not be told who they were exposed to. These potential contacts will be given the tools to monitor their symptoms and decrease their risk of spreading COVID-19.

We are keeping your information private. If you are a contact:

- Nothing you say will be told to the person who has COVID-19.
- Your personal information will not be released.
- Your symptoms and disease status will be used to make sure you get better, and that the disease does not spread any further.

## **If schools are open for in-person classes, what does Contact Tracing look like for a student who tests positive for COVID-19 and has potentially come into contact with 100+ individuals?**

Instructions and further guidance will depend on the proximity and duration of time spent with the student who has tested positive for COVID-19. Local Health Departments are working closely with their local school systems to keep and maintain manifests, attendance lists, and seating charts. A Public Health worker will be contacting the student, or parent or guardian of a student who tested positive, and Contact Tracers will reach out to potential contacts providing them with guidance and next steps. For more information about the COVID-19 response within Kentucky schools, visit the [Kentucky Department for Education's COVID-19 webpage](#).

## **As an essential business, we have relied on our own Contact Tracing efforts. Will we continue to notify and quarantine our employees, too?**

No, Local Health Departments will get a notification that someone has tested positive for COVID-19, which will start the Contact Tracing process. That patient will then work with a Public Health worker to identify all possible contacts and locations visited within the last few days. The Public Health worker will ask about their behaviors, such as wearing a mask and physically distancing. Once the risk of exposure has been assessed, these contacts will then be contacted by a Contact Tracer and provided with guidance and next steps.

However, we all have a responsibility to help manage this, and you have a responsibility to take the precautions you feel you need to protect yourself and your loved ones.

## **Now that retail and restaurants are open, how will Contact Tracers know if a business's patrons are infected?**

If someone diagnosed with COVID-19 reports that they visited a restaurant and/or retail business in the past 14 days since being diagnosed, the restaurant and/or retail business will receive a notification that there may have been a person

infected with COVID-19 on their premises. Additional guidance and next steps will be provided by the Contact Tracer.

### **How can people apply to be a Contact Tracer?**

A link is available on the [kycovid19.ky.gov](https://kycovid19.ky.gov) website, through which one can [apply](#).

### **How will Contact Tracing affect health care professionals and frontline workers?**

Health care professionals and frontline workers will be taken through the same process as all individuals participating in the Contact Tracing process.

### **Will Local Health Departments be sharing this information on their social media pages?**

Yes, we are working closely with LHDs to encourage the distribution of materials. Additionally, materials in English, Spanish, Somali, Burmese, and Chinese are available to download at [kycovid19.ky.gov](https://kycovid19.ky.gov).

### **How is personal information stored and protected for people contacted and asked to answer questions?**

All of the information collected is stored in secure databases with multi-factor authentication and can only be accessed by people supporting this public health work. Public Health workers and Contact Tracers are carefully screened and adhere to strict confidentiality agreements.

### **Many Contact Tracing scare tactics are circulating social media. Is there any truth in these tactics?**

Contact Tracing is a confidential and safe public health resource. Contact Tracing is meant for public health use only. Disease Investigators and Contact Tracers are advocates for the health and safety of all Kentuckians. The Kentucky Department for Public Health and Local Health Departments work earnestly to ensure that your information is always kept confidential and safe.

## Will contacts be advised to get tested?

Contacts are advised to get tested if they have been exposed to and/or they are experiencing symptoms.

## Will the contacts be given help to find a testing location?

Yes, local testing site information will be made available to a contact by the Contact Tracer speaking with them. This information is also available on the [kycovid19.ky.gov](https://kycovid19.ky.gov) website.

## What if a Contact Tracer asks me for my social security number, passwords, and/or banking information?

If contacted by a Contact Tracer, you will be asked for your name, date of birth, and health information. If you receive a call or message asking for banking or private information, please do not reply, hang up and report the call to the Office of the Attorney General at **1-800-804-7556**.

## Are potential contacts instructed to quarantine or only monitor symptoms?

The Contact Tracer will help assess the Contact's level of risk based on the length of time and proximity of the COVID-19 exposure. The Contact Tracer will also ask about risk-reducing behaviors, such as wearing a mask and physically distancing. Once the Contact Tracer assesses the risk, they will provide instructions on next steps.

## How long should I expect to quarantine?

If you are [exposed](#) to a COVID-19 positive person, you should quarantine. Your time in quarantine will keep you from spreading the virus to others. When in quarantine you should wear your mask indoors and outdoors.

If you are [exposed](#) to a COVID-19 positive person and have NO symptoms, there are three different ways you can quarantine.

1. Quarantine for 14 days; especially if you are going to be around people that are [high-risk](#) for the virus: elderly, people with comorbidities, or immunocompromised (*Recommended*)
2. Quarantine for 10 days if you **have NO [symptoms](#)**
3. Quarantine for 7 days if you have a negative COVID-19 test on or after Day 5 and **have NO [symptoms](#)**

### **How is Contact Tracing handled in situations where there are strict legal and ethical requirements for confidentiality?**

Positive cases are automatically reported to Local Health Departments. HIPAA rules still apply, and every protection is in place to protect the confidentiality of positive cases and their identified contacts.

### **Are there benchmarks for how quickly someone is contacted if they test positive?**

Once a test is returned positive, the health care provider must report the positive case. The goal of the disease investigation is to start immediately and for contacts of the person who has tested positive for COVID-19 to be notified within 24 hours.

### **What is the basic protocol for someone testing positive and the people who live in the same house? How are families identified and contacted by Contact Tracers?**

The person with a COVID-19 positive result should be isolated from the family, if possible. The rest of the family would be identified as contacts. These family members are expected to quarantine and monitor their symptoms. Local Health Departments and Contact Tracing teams are prepared to assist individuals and families needing support while self-isolating.