



A Tradition of Stewardship  
A Commitment to Service

# Public Health Case Contact Investigations

Updated April 20, 2020



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

## Case Contact Investigation Process

1. **Testing:** When an individual meets criteria for testing either through their medical provider or through Public Health, they are tested and are instructed to wait at home for results, which can generally take from 3-5 days.
2. **Positive Result and Legal Orders:** If the result is positive, the person receives a phone call on the day the result comes in and is given legal orders to isolate at home, while household members are given legal orders to quarantine in the home (in the person's preferred language).
  - a. The duration of isolation and quarantine depend on how long symptoms are present and whether or not over people in the household test positive for COVID-19.
  - b. The index case (person who tested positive) receives daily symptom monitoring.
  - c. The household contacts (people who live in the home of the index case) must also report on symptoms daily.
  - d. Public Health staff provide explanations on why isolation and quarantine are important and necessary, and work to connect families with resources they need to be able to stay at home
3. **Investigation:** Once the orders are given, the Public Health Nurse will continue the investigation by asking the index case (person who tested positive) where this person has been while symptoms were present and in the 2 days before symptoms started. This includes who the person has been around outside of the home and how long the contact has been with these people.
  - a. The nurse records locations (restaurants, businesses, place of employment) and names of individuals who have been exposed to the case.
  - b. Part of the investigation will be to determine if there is a connection with other positive cases, which would indicate the case is part of a cluster.
  - c. The nurse also identifies whether there are any unmet needs such as food, medication, or crowded housing situations where the risk for infection may be higher, etc.
4. **Notification of exposure:** Once the appropriate documentation is complete, the Contact Investigation Team makes the initial calls to people and businesses to let them know that they or their employees have had close contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19, but do not share the name of the person to protect the person's privacy.
  - a. If the contacts to the case are asymptomatic, they are monitored by the Contact Investigation team for up to 14 days for symptoms.
  - b. If the contact to the case is symptomatic, the person may be immediately referred for testing. If the individual is tested and tests positive, process #1-3 repeats itself.

**GOAL: Search for patterns, clusters and continue  
contact investigations to contain the spread of COVID-19.**

**\*Please note** – there are many internal steps that take place between each process that are too detailed to be included in this document. The investigation for one index case can take anywhere from 3-9 hours, depending on the number of contacts and other factors.

For specific questions about the case investigation process, please email: [Coronavirus@countyofnapa.org](mailto:Coronavirus@countyofnapa.org).



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## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Q: Why can't you share the information of the person who tested positive or where they have been?**

A: The Public Health Division must abide by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and may only share private health information, including name and other identifying information for the purposes of treatment, payment or operational purposes. People who have been exposed to an index case are notified and told that they have been exposed, but do not get the personal information of that index case.

It is also challenging to share demographic information by City because we live in a small community and if we shared this information, we might unintentionally compromise privacy. The information on the COVID-19 testing data site is the information that we can share in good faith, while protecting the privacy of our community members.

### **Q: How can we be sure we haven't been exposed?**

A: Let's say the index case went to a specific store a couple of days before being tested, the only individuals who may have been exposed are cashiers and they are still low risk at this point. That is why it is important for cashiers to wear mouth coverings and gloves when interacting with the public.

The best way to prevent exposure is to respect physical distancing guidelines, maintain appropriate hand washing hygiene and coughing etiquette. Also, please do not go out or go to work if you are sick, even if you have mild symptoms.

If you are an essential services employee, keep social distancing guidelines and ensure you wash your hands often, avoid touching your eyes, mouth and nose and wear a mouth covering.

Please note, we are not able to detect all cases due to the limited availability of testing. Individuals should always assume they are and will be at risk of becoming exposed because the virus is transmitting in the community right now. For now, the best tool we continue to have to prevent the spread of disease continues to be physical distancing and the main way to prevent exposure.

### **Q: I work or have been around someone who tested positive who lives in another county. Why haven't I been notified?**

A: Napa County Public Health only receives test result information for people who live in Napa County. If someone lives in Solano or Sonoma County and works in Napa County, we may not know unless we are notified that workplace clusters are happening. Additionally, because of this unprecedented time, some counties no longer have the capacity to do contact investigations and are not notifying people who may have been in contact with the index case.

If you know that you have been exposed, you can notify the Public Health Division and the Division can determine whether an investigation is needed in Napa County.