

## Case Investigation and Contact Tracing: COVID-19

Case investigation and contact tracing work together to help slow the spread of COVID-19. Case investigation identifies where people who have COVID-19 may have been exposed or infected others. Case investigations also help to identify contacts, or people who may have been exposed to someone with COVID-19. Contact tracing helps to further slow the spread of the virus by talking to contacts about how to stay home and away from others. It is important for cases to stay home and isolate and for contacts to quarantine even if they feel fine so they do not infect others.

### How COVID-19 case investigation works

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Lab tests for COVID-19 are reported to the health department the same way other infectious diseases are reported.

Case investigations work to minimize the spread of the virus. People who test positive for COVID-19 will be contacted by a trained public health worker to talk about symptoms and places where they may have exposed others (living, work, or social settings). Public health workers make sure those who test positive, or who are exposed to the virus, get information that helps decrease the spread of COVID-19 to others.

### Answer the call

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It is important to answer telephone calls or text messages from public health workers doing case investigations. The process works to slow the spread of COVID-19 if those who test positive for the virus, and their close contacts, answer calls or texts and follow instructions around how to stay home and away from others.

Trained public health workers can answer your questions about services and different ways to protect your family, friends, and community. These workers will leave a message if they cannot reach you. Please return their calls as soon as you can.

### Online survey option

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Minnesotans who have tested positive for COVID-19 have the option to answer case investigation questions online instead of over the phone. The online survey walks the person through the same questions as the phone interview and gives the same follow-up information.

People who test positive and gave a cell phone number that can receive texts will get a text message with instructions for requesting the online survey in their preferred language. Once the survey link is requested, a link will be sent by email. The survey link sent by email is active for three days. The online survey is available in four languages: English, Spanish, Somali, and Hmong. You do not have to reply to the text message if you want a phone call instead. If you do not reply to the text, a trained public health worker will call you to talk about how to stay home and to avoid infecting others.

#### How COVID-19 contact tracing works

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Contact tracing helps to further slow the spread of the virus by trying to identify close contacts of people who have COVID-19 during the interview process. Close contacts are people who may have been exposed to someone who has COVID-19 and should stay home and away from others (quarantine) and get tested.

A trained public health worker then contacts the people who spent time close to the person with COVID-19 in a social setting or a workplace. The worker helps contacts find information online and answer their questions around how to quarantine, when to get tested, and how to get tested.

People who live with someone who tested positive and other close contacts are told they should stay home. They are told to watch for symptoms, how to stay away from others, and to get tested.

#### Special circumstances

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Special teams from the health department may get involved if a close contact is a health care worker or lives or works in a congregate setting. This includes someone who works in a nursing home or other settings where a lot of people live in the same place, such as jails, shelters, treatment centers, etc. These types of setting can be higher risk of being exposed to someone with COVID-19 and exposing others to the virus.

## Privacy

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Protecting the privacy of people's personal information is critical to public health. It is also state law. People who test positive for COVID-19 get a detailed privacy notice when contacted by public health workers to let them know what information is being asked for, who has access to it, and how it will be shared. People have the right to refuse an interview or giving any information during the interview. Information given to the health department is shared with local public health officials and public health staff working on the COVID-19 response.

To protect the health and safety of others, the health department may need to share your name and COVID-19 status with a school, child care, or workplace especially if you work in a health care setting. We will try to reach you by phone first to explain why your name may need to be shared.