COVID-19 FAQs

TESTING

Should I be tested for COVID-19?

If you have symptoms of COVID-19 and want to get tested, call Park County Public Health at (719) 836-4174 or your health care provider.

You can also visit the Park County Public Health Agency website or the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment website to look for the latest local information on testing. See Test for Past Infection for more information.

How can I get tested for COVID-19?

Two kinds of tests are available for COVID-19: viral tests and antibody tests. A viral test checks for a current infection. An antibody test checks for a previous infection.

If you think you need a viral test, call the Park County Public Health Agency at (719) 836-4174 and tell them about your symptoms and how you think you may have been exposed to the virus. See Testing for Current Infection for more information.

What is the difference between a viral (swab) and antibody (blood) test?

A viral test tells you if you have a current infection.

An antibody test tells you if you had a previous infection.

Viral tests are used to diagnose COVID-19. These tests tell you if you currently have an infection with the virus that causes COVID-19. Viral tests, also known as PCR swab tests, identify the virus in respiratory samples from swabbing the inside of your nose. **This is the test Park County Public Health is conducting.**

An antibody or serology test involves drawing blood to test for antibodies of the COVID-19 virus and it will tell you if you have been exposed to the COVID-19 virus. Park County Public Health does not offer this test at this time.

If I have recovered from COVID-19, will I be immune to it?

We do not know yet if people who recover from COVID-19 can get infected again. CDC and partners are investigating to determine if a person can get sick with COVID-19 more than once. Until we know more, continue taking steps to protect yourself and others.

Can someone test negative and later test positive on a viral test for COVID-19?

Yes, it is possible. You may test negative if the sample was collected early in your infection and test positive later during this illness. You could also be exposed to COVID-19 after the test and get infected then. Even if you test negative, you still should take steps to protect yourself and others. See Testing for Current Infection for more information.

What does a positive COVID-19 case mean?

There are three basic types of positive COVID-19 cases:

1. **Lab confirmed case**- This means that a person tested positive for COVID-19 using a swab test.
2. **Probable positive case**- This means a person had close contact with a lab-confirmed positive COVID-19 individual and is now experiencing COVID-19-like symptoms. When a probable positive person is tested, their results may be positive or negative for COVID-19.
3. **Suspected positive case**- This means an individual is reporting COVID-19 symptoms, but does not have any link to a lab confirmed case and does not yet have either a positive or negative test result.

How does Park County Public Health obtain positive case information?

In Colorado, laboratories are required by law to report certain communicable diseases and COVID-19 is one of them. The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) maintains a Communicable Disease database and the Park County Public Health medical staff has access to this secure database, which allows our staff to identify positive cases.

Additionally, if you are tested by Park County Public Health, we will receive positive and negative test results directly from the lab that processes your test.

Is my information kept private and confidential?

The Park County Public Health Agency abides by HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) privacy laws. All information collected during an interview will only be used within the Public Health arena and in accordance with HIPAA. We will never share a positive COVID-19 case name or personal information with any close contacts that we interview.

CONTACT TRACING

What is contact tracing?

Contact tracing is used by health departments and agencies to prevent the spread of infectious disease. In general, contact tracing involves identifying people who have an infectious disease (cases) and their close contacts (people who may have been exposed) and working with them to interrupt disease transmission. For COVID-19, this includes asking cases to isolate and contacts to quarantine at home voluntarily.

Contact tracing for COVID-19 typically involves

- Interviewing people with COVID-19 to identify everyone with whom they had close contact during the time they may have been infectious,
- Notifying close contacts of their potential exposure,
- Referring close contacts for testing,
- Monitoring close contacts for signs and symptoms of COVID-19, and
- Connecting close contacts with services they might need during the self-quarantine period.

To prevent the further spread of disease, COVID-19 close contacts are required to stay home and maintain social distance (at least 6 feet) from others until 14 days after their last exposure to a person with COVID-19. Contacts should monitor themselves by checking their temperature twice daily and watching for symptoms of COVID-19.

What happens during contact tracing?

Generally, contact tracing includes the following steps:

- **Case investigation:** Public health staff work with a patient to help them recall everyone with whom they have had close contact during the time when they may have been infectious.
- **Contact tracing:** Public health staff begin contact tracing by notifying exposed individuals (close contacts) of their potential exposure as rapidly and sensitively as possible, not revealing the infected patient's identity.
- **Contact support:** Close contacts are provided with education, information, and support to help them understand their risk, what they should do to separate themselves from others who are not exposed, and how to monitor themselves for illness. In addition, they are informed of the possibility that they could spread the infection to others even if they do not feel ill.
- **Self-quarantine:** Close contacts are encouraged to stay home, monitor their health, and maintain social distance (at least 6 feet) from others until 14 days after their last exposure to the infected patient, in case they also become ill.

Who is considered a close contact to someone with COVID-19?

For COVID-19, a close contact is defined as anyone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes starting from 48 hours before the person began feeling sick until the time the patient was isolated.

What can a person diagnosed with COVID-19 expect to happen during contact tracing?

If you are diagnosed with COVID-19, a case investigator from the Park County Public Health Agency may call you to check-in on your health, discuss who you've been in contact with, and ask where you spent time while you may have been infectious and able to spread COVID-19 to others. You will also be asked to stay at home and self-isolate, if you are not doing so already.

- Your name **will not** be revealed to those you may have exposed, even if they ask.
- Self-isolation means staying at home in a specific room away from other people and pets, and using a separate bathroom, if possible.
- Self-isolation helps slow the spread of COVID-19 and can help keep your family, friends, neighbors, and others you may come in contact with healthy.
- If you need support or assistance while self-isolating, Park County Public Health can refer you to community organizations may be able to provide assistance.

Symptoms of COVID-19 can include fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, and diarrhea. If your symptoms worsen or become severe, you should seek medical care. Severe symptoms include trouble breathing, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, confusion, inability to wake or stay awake, or bluish lips or face.

What can close contacts expect to happen during contact tracing?

If you have been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19, a contact tracer from Park County Public Health might contact you to inform you that you've been exposed to COVID-19.

You should stay at home and self-quarantine for 14 days, starting from the last day you were possibly exposed to COVID-19. The contact tracer will help identify the dates of your self-quarantine. The contact tracer can also provide resources about COVID-19 testing in your area.

- Self-quarantine means staying home, monitoring your health, and maintaining social distancing (at least 6 feet) from others at all times.

- If you need to be around other people or animals in or outside of the home, wear a cloth face covering. This will help protect the people around you.
- If you need support or assistance with self-quarantine, Park County Public Health can refer you to community organizations may be able to provide assistance.

You should take your temperature twice a day, watch for symptoms of COVID-19, and notify Park County Public Health at **(719) 836-4174** if you develop symptoms. You should also notify people you had close contact with recently if you become ill, so they can monitor their health. If your symptoms worsen or become severe, you should seek medical care. Severe symptoms include trouble breathing, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, confusion, inability to wake or stay awake, or bluish lips or face.

Am I considered a close contact if I was wearing a cloth face covering?

Yes, you are still considered a close contact even if you were wearing a cloth face covering while you were within six (6) feet for at least 15 minutes of someone with COVID-19. Cloth face coverings are meant to prevent someone from transmitting the disease from others, and not to protect someone from becoming infected.

What will happen with my personal information during contact tracing?

Discussions with health agency staff are confidential. Park County Public Health abides by HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) privacy laws. This means that your personal and medical information will be kept private and only shared with those who may need to know, like your health care provider.

Your name **will not** be revealed to those you came in contact with. Park County Public Health will only notify your close contacts that they might have been exposed to COVID-19.

What if I have been around someone who was identified as a close contact?

If you have been around someone who was identified as a close contact to a person with COVID-19, you should closely monitor yourself for any symptoms of COVID-19. You do not need to self-quarantine.

PLEASE REMEMBER TO FOLLOW

THE BIG 3

SAFETY GUIDELINES:

- **Wear a face covering**

- **Wash hands frequently**

- **Maintain physical distance**