
NEW MEXICO HEALTH ALERT NETWORK (HAN)

ADVISORY

NMDOH recommends the symptom-based or time-based method for discontinuation of self-isolation for all persons with confirmed COVID-19

May 29, 2020

The CDC has reported that infectious SARS-CoV-2 virus, the causative agent of COVID-19 disease, has not been successfully cultured 10 days after illness onset. Nonetheless, there have been numerous documented instances in which recovered COVID-19 patients continue to test positive for weeks. As a result, **NMDOH recommends the symptom- or time-based method for discontinuation of self-isolation for all persons with confirmed COVID-19.**

The symptom-based, test-based, and time-based strategies for all persons who are not residents of nursing homes or homeless shelters are summarized below.

For persons with confirmed COVID-19 and were symptomatic:

Symptom-based method

Maintain isolation until:

- At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed *since resolution of fever* without the use of fever-reducing medications **and** improvement in respiratory symptoms; **AND**,
- At least 10 days have passed *since symptoms first appeared*.

Test-based method

Maintain isolation until:

- Resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications, **AND**
- Improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath), **AND**
- Negative results of an FDA Emergency Use Authorized molecular assay for COVID-19 from at least two consecutive nasopharyngeal swab specimens collected ≥ 24 hours apart (total of two negative specimens).
- **Note:** There have been reports of prolonged detection of RNA without direct correlation to viral culture. The detection of viral RNA by PCR does not necessarily mean that infectious virus is present, however, to minimize risk of transmission, we consider a positive PCR test result to present a risk of transmission.

For persons with laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 who have not had any symptoms:

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Note: Symptoms cannot be used to determine where these individuals are in the course of their illness. While it is possible that the duration of viral shedding could be longer than 10 days after their first positive test, the risk is presumed to be extremely low.

Time-based method

Maintain isolation until:

- 10 days have passed since the date of their most recent positive COVID-19 diagnostic test assuming they have not subsequently developed symptoms since their positive test. If they develop symptoms, then the test-based or symptom-based strategy should be used based on the date of symptom onset.

Test-based method

Maintain isolation until:

Negative results of an FDA Emergency Use Authorized molecular assay for COVID-19 from at least two consecutive nasopharyngeal swab specimens collected ≥ 24 hours apart (total of two negative specimens).

For confirmed COVID-19 residents of nursing homes and residents returning to homeless shelters, NMDOH is extending the minimum self-isolation period from 10 days to 14 days for the symptom- or time-based method. The test-based method will remain the same. The updated symptom- and time-based methods for these two high-risk groups are summarized below.

For residents of nursing homes or homeless shelters with confirmed COVID-19 and were symptomatic:

Symptom-based method

Maintain isolation until:

- At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed *since resolution of fever* without the use of fever-reducing medications **and** improvement in respiratory symptoms; **AND**,
- At least **14 days** have passed *since symptoms first appeared*.

For residents of nursing homes or homeless shelters with laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 who have not had any symptoms:

Time-based method

Maintain isolation until:

- **14 days** have passed since the date of their most recent positive COVID-19 diagnostic test assuming they have not subsequently developed symptoms since their positive test. If they develop symptoms, then the test-based or symptom-based strategy should be used based on the date of symptom onset.

Additionally, in instances where a person with confirmed COVID-19 re-tests positive during or after the completion of the symptom-based or time-based isolation period, NMDOH recommends the following:

1. The full test-based method and continue to isolate until the case has two negative results of an FDA Emergency Use Authorized molecular assay for COVID-19 from at least two consecutive nasopharyngeal swab specimens collected at least 24 hours apart, **OR**
2. Restart the symptom-based or time-based method, extending at least 10 more days for isolation from the date of the last positive result.

NMDOH attempts to notify and investigate all persons with confirmed COVID-19 and to provide guidance on isolation. Individuals are contacted throughout their isolation period to confirm appropriate isolation conditions at home and to establish the date for discontinuation of self-isolation. With the understanding that healthcare providers are also providing guidance to their patients regarding when they are considered recovered, NMDOH would like to ensure consistent recommendations.

For questions or to report a COVID-19 hospitalization, please call the NMDOH Epidemiology and Response Division at 505-827-0071.

Resources

- [CDC Guidance for Discontinuation of Transmission-based Precautions of Patients in Healthcare Settings.](#)
- [NMDOH COVID-19 Webpage](#)
- [CDC COVID-19 Webpage](#)
- **New Mexico Health Alert Network:** To register for the New Mexico Health Alert Network, go to <https://member.everbridge.net/index/453003085613008#/login> and click “Sign Up” at the bottom of the page. Provide all information on each screen, click on “Save and Continue,” and click on “Finish” at the end to begin receiving important health alerts and advisories.