

ADVISORY: Quarantine Recommendations After SARS-CoV-2 Antibody Test

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TO:	Health Alert Network
FROM:	Alison V. Beam, JD, Acting Secretary of Health
SUBJECT:	ADVISORY: Quarantine Recommendations After SARS-CoV-2 Antibody Test
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This transmission is a “Health Advisory,” provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

HOSPITALS: PLEASE SHARE WITH ALL MEDICAL, PEDIATRIC, NURSING AND LABORATORY STAFF IN YOUR HOSPITAL; **EMS COUNCILS:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE; **FQHCs:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE **LOCAL HEALTH JURISDICTIONS:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE; **PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE TO YOUR MEMBERSHIP; **LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES:** PLEASE SHARE WITH ALL MEDICAL, INFECTION CONTROL, AND NURSING STAFF IN YOUR FACILITY

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) updated its quarantine [recommendations](#) to include use of SARS-CoV-2 antibody test results.
- Persons who test positive for SARS-CoV-2 antibodies do not need to quarantine following a known exposure if the following criteria are met:
 1. The person is in a low risk situation (e.g., no contact with persons at high risk of COVID-19 severe illness for 14 days); AND,
 2. The person remains asymptomatic; AND,
 3. The person had a known exposure and has had a positive antibody test during the 3 months prior to the exposure; **OR**,
 4. The person receives a positive antibody test within 7 days following an exposure.
- This guidance does **NOT** apply to healthcare facility patients, residents, and staff.
- Regardless of antibody test results, persons who exhibit new or unexplained symptoms of COVID-19 still need to isolate and be evaluated for COVID-19 testing.
- DOH continues to recommend COVID-19 prevention measures such as masking, physical distancing, avoiding nonessential travel, and hand hygiene for all people regardless of vaccination status or past history of COVID-19 infection.
- If you have questions about this guidance, please call your local health department or 1-877-PA-HEALTH (1-877-724-3258).

Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) provides this guidance based on available information about COVID-19 and it is subject to change.

In accordance with recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), DOH has updated the quarantine guidance for people who have positive antibody tests for SARS-CoV-2. This guidance applies to the general population, including businesses and schools. This guidance does **NOT** apply to healthcare facility patients, residents, and staff. Antibody test results do not change any existing guidance for healthcare facilities, patients, visitors or staff following an exposure.

UNDERSTANDING ANTIBODY TEST RESULTS

Antibody tests look for antibodies in blood to determine if a person has had a past infection with the virus that caused COVID-19. It typically takes 1–3 weeks after infection for the body to make antibodies. For this reason, antibody tests should not be used to diagnose a current infection with SARS-CoV-2. Some people may take even longer to develop antibodies, and some people who are infected may not ever develop antibodies. An immediate antibody test would need to be performed as close as possible to exposure, and prior to the 1–3 week window, to capture evidence of antibodies existing from a previous infection.

A positive SARS-CoV-2 antibody test result shows the patient may have antibodies from an infection with the virus that causes COVID-19. Having antibodies to the virus that causes COVID-19 may provide protection from getting infected with the virus again. But even if it does, it is unknown how much protection the antibodies may provide or for how long this protection may last. Confirmed and suspected cases of reinfection have been reported but remain rare.

Additionally, it is also possible that a person's positive antibody result is from antibodies which resulted from an infection with a different virus in the coronavirus family. Note: Other coronaviruses cannot produce a positive result on a viral test for SARS-CoV-2. For this reason, use of antibody tests to determine immunity need to be used with caution. Using information about COVID-19 exposure in addition to results and timing of a positive antibody test can help inform their use when determining quarantine status.

Regardless of whether an antibody test is positive or negative, the results do not confirm whether the patient is able to spread SARS-CoV-2. The patient should continue to take steps to protect themselves and others.

QUARANTINE EXPECTATIONS FOR PERSONS WITH POSITIVE ANTIBODY TEST

Based on limitations and challenges of interpreting antibody tests, DOH is allowing persons who have a positive antibody test to be exempted from quarantine after a known exposure in limited circumstances. Persons who test positive for SARS-CoV-2 antibodies do **NOT** need to quarantine following a known exposure if the following criteria are met:

- The person is in a low risk situation; AND,
- The person remains asymptomatic; AND,
- The person had a known exposure and has had a positive antibody test during the 3 months prior to the exposure; OR,
- The person had a known exposure and receives a positive antibody test within 7 days following the exposure.

Low risk situations include settings where contact with persons at high risk of COVID-19 severe illness, including [older adults and persons with certain medical conditions](#), is not anticipated for at least 14 days following exposure. This guidance does not apply to healthcare facilities, patients, residents or staff because these are not considered low risk situations. Healthcare personnel with a positive antibody test who meet the criteria outlined above would not be required to quarantine at home or in the community but may not continue to work during the 14-day quarantine period.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

People who have tested positive for COVID-19 within the past 3 months using a viral test [nucleic acid amplification tests (NAATs) or antigen test] and recovered do not have to quarantine or get tested again after an exposure as long as they do not develop new symptoms. People who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 do not have to quarantine or get tested again as long as they do not develop new symptoms (refer to [PA-HAN-559](#)).

In all cases, individuals should self-monitor for symptoms following a known exposure, regardless of antibody, past infection, or vaccination status. Any person with new or unexplained symptoms of COVID-19 still needs to isolate and be evaluated for COVID-19 testing.

DOH and CDC continue to discourage any non-essential travel, even for people who are fully vaccinated or who have positive antibody tests, because protection is not 100%, durability of immunity is unknown, and there are new circulating strains of SARS-CoV-2 in other states and countries that are being investigated.

Additionally, DOH continues to recommend COVID-19 prevention measures such as masking, physical distancing, and hand hygiene for all people regardless of vaccination status, antibody test results, or past history of COVID-19 infection.

If you have questions about this guidance, please call your local health department or **1-877-PA-HEALTH (1-877-724-3258)**.

Individuals interested in receiving further PA-HANs are encouraged to register at <https://han.pa.gov/>.

Categories of Health Alert messages:

Health Alert: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

This information is current as of March 24, 2021 but may be modified in the future. We will continue to post updated information regarding the most common questions about this subject.
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