



Date: March 19, 2020

DPH Numbered Memo 2020-12

To: Local Health Departments

From: Jeanne Ayers, R.N., M.P.H.  
State Health Officer, Administrator, Division of Public Health

**Updated guidance for local health departments and government partners about home isolation and quarantine for COVID-19**

**PLEASE DISTRIBUTE WIDELY**

On March 16, the CDC published updated interim guidance about [Discontinuation of Home Isolation for Persons with COVID-19](#). While limited information is available to perfectly characterize the duration of viral shedding for persons with COVID-19, adoption of a common standard for discontinuing isolation recommendations is needed for making decisions about return to work and home isolation. The current recommendation is that discontinuation of isolation can occur without the need for follow-up COVID-19 testing (“test-of-cure”) if the following conditions are met:

- At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed *since recovery* defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications **and** improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath);

**and**

- At least 7 days have passed *since symptoms first appeared*.

DHS supports adoption of this standard in community settings as well as health care settings, and can be used to determine when individuals are able to safely return to work. This recommendation replaces earlier guidance shared in a [DHS Memo dated March 13, 2020](#), specifying that home isolation should extend to a minimum for 14 days since the onset of symptoms.

**When should individuals who are exposed to COVID-19 but who are asymptomatic be excluded from work?**

At this time, DHS and CDC continue to recommend voluntary home quarantine and active symptom monitoring for all individuals who have a [high risk or medium risk exposure](#) to a person with laboratory-confirmed COVID-19.

As community-level transmission continues to increase in Wisconsin and exposure to COVID-19 becomes more commonplace, excluding individuals from work who provide essential services such health care, law enforcement, and other important functions may become impossible. At this time, DHS

recommends continuing to evaluate the risk level of all possible COVID-19 exposures, and to abide by quarantine recommendations if resources allow. If agencies have determined that staffing shortages among essential staff cannot support routine exclusion from work due to COVID-19 exposure, than staff may return to work if a system of daily symptom monitoring is in place. All employees should stop working and notify their employer if they develop fever or respiratory symptoms including sore throat, runny nose, cough, or shortness of breath.

**Resources:**

DHS COVID-19 webpage: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/index.htm>