

You've read about people self-quarantining, social distancing, or isolating themselves during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. You may be confused about the various terms and wonder what you should be doing.

These terms describe approaches for limiting the spread of disease during epidemics and pandemics:

- **Quarantine.** Separating people and limiting movement of people who have or may have been exposed to the disease to see if they become ill.
- **Isolation.** Separating people who are ill from others who are not ill to keep the disease from spreading.

## Quarantine

Doctors or local health departments may ask or require people to go into quarantine who might have been exposed to COVID-19 or who've recently had close contact with someone with COVID-19. This can help to prevent spread of illness from people with COVID-19 before they feel ill or have symptoms. Quarantine can mean staying at home. People who don't develop symptoms of COVID-19 after the quarantine period ends are released.

If you're quarantining at home because you might have been exposed to COVID-19 or you have had close contact with someone with COVID-19, the CDC recommends that you monitor yourself as follows:

- Stay home for 14 days.
- Watch for common signs and symptoms, such as fever, cough or shortness of breath.
- Keep distance (6 feet, or 2 meters) between yourself and others.
- Stay away from other people as much as possible, especially people at high risk of serious illness. Wear a mask if contact with other people can't be avoided.

Isolate yourself at home if you feel ill. Call your doctor if symptoms worsen

## Isolation

Doctors or local health departments may take special isolation precautions for coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). They will likely ask or require people to go into isolation who have the virus that causes COVID-19 or who have symptoms of COVID-19. People who do not have symptoms but have tested positive for the virus that causes COVID-19 will also likely be asked to go into isolation. Hospitals have isolation units for very ill people. But doctors may advise many people with mild symptoms of COVID-19 to isolate at home.

During home isolation, you'll need to stay away from family members and pets. Wear a mask if you are near others. Avoid sharing dishes, glasses, bedding and other household items. Use a separate bedroom and bathroom if possible. If your symptoms get worse, contact your doctor for medical advice. Follow recommendations from your doctor and local health department about when you can end isolation. These measures can help limit the spread of COVID-19.

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/coronavirus/in-depth/coronavirus-quarantine-and-isolation/art-20484503>