## Arlington County Public Health: Steps for COVID-19 Contact Tracing

### 1) Labs & Health Care Providers Report COVID-19 Cases to the Health Department

Labs and healthcare providers report COVID-19 “cases” to the health department. After getting these reports, the health department starts a process called “Contact Tracing.” The health department does not test for COVID-19.

### 2) Interview Case

The health department contacts the case (person with COVID-19) and asks about:
- Their symptoms and when they started
- Who they have been within 6 feet of for at least a few minutes (48 hours before symptoms started until they stopped having contact with others) - these people are the case’s **close contacts**
- Things that may make them more likely to get very sick (e.g., pre-existing health conditions)
- Things that make them more likely to expose others (e.g., having close contact, living with others, sharing food utensils, occupation)

### 3) Advise Case

Health department staff advise the case to:
- Not have physical contact with others (**isolation period**) until they are no longer likely to pass the illness on to others
- Follow guidelines for household cleaning and personal hygiene (e.g., hand washing)
- Monitor their symptoms of COVID-19
- Treat minor symptoms of COVID-19 with standard over the counter medications
- Safely seek care from a health care provider (by calling ahead) if symptoms worsen
- Wear a mask if it is necessary to leave the home

### 4) Interview Close Contacts to Case

Next, the health department reaches out to the case’s close contacts. Staff let them know they have been exposed to a person with COVID-19 and assess their risk of getting sick. Risk is based on:
- Time and closeness of the contact with the case (i.e., spending more time with the case in proximity increases risk)
- Type of contact with the case (i.e., a lot of physical touching or contact with the case’s bodily fluids increases risk)
- Any additional factors like the contact’s occupation

### 5) Advise Close Contacts to Case

After assessing risk, staff advise the close contact to:
- Stay at home for at least 14 days from the last date they were in close contact with the case (**quarantine period**)
- Follow guidelines for household cleaning and personal hygiene (e.g., hand washing)
- Monitor for signs and symptoms of COVID-19
- Treat minor symptoms of COVID-19 with standard over the counter medications
- Safely seek care from a health care provider (by calling ahead) if symptoms worsen
- Wear a mask if it is necessary to leave the home

### 6) Monitor Cases and Close Contacts at Higher Risk

Staff regularly contact cases and close contacts at higher risk of getting sick. They:
- Ask if their symptoms have gotten better or worse, or stopped
- Identify problems they may have staying isolated from others
- Offer resources to support them
- Assess their readiness to be released from quarantine or isolation

### 7) Release from Restrictions

Staff assess when release from isolation or quarantine is appropriate. Release is based on length of time, when symptoms end, and other factors.

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Please see our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) for more information on Contact Tracing.