

## State plans to adopt revised CDC COVID-19 isolation and quarantine guidelines

Written by gallupsun

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*Currently evaluating potential timeline for implementation*

SANTA FE - The New Mexico Department of Health announced Dec. 29 that it plans to adopt new federal guidance surrounding isolation and quarantine for COVID-19. The state is currently updating its contact tracing protocols and other key processes and will announce a more specific implementation timeline in the near future.

On Dec. 27, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reduced its recommended COVID guidelines for isolation (following a positive COVID test) and quarantine (following exposure)

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from ten days to five days. Isolation and quarantine are critical tools for preventing the spread of COVID, especially by asymptomatic people who may spread the disease unknowingly. The CDC's updated guidelines read, in part:

Given what we currently know about COVID-19 and the Omicron variant, CDC is shortening the recommended time for isolation from 10 days for people with COVID-19 to 5 days, if asymptomatic, followed by 5 days of wearing a mask when around others. The change is motivated by science demonstrating that the majority of SARS-CoV-2 transmission occurs early in the course of illness, generally in the 1-2 days prior to onset of symptoms and the 2-3 days after. Therefore, people who test positive should isolate for 5 days and, if asymptomatic at that time, they may leave isolation if they can continue to mask for 5 days to minimize the risk of infecting others.

Additionally, CDC is updating the recommended quarantine period for those exposed to COVID-19. For people who are unvaccinated or are more than six months out from their second mRNA dose (or more than 2 months after the J&J vaccine) and not yet boosted, CDC now recommends quarantine for 5 days followed by strict mask use for an additional 5 days. Alternatively, if a 5-day quarantine is not feasible, it is imperative that an exposed person wear a well-fitting mask at all times when around others for 10 days after exposure. Individuals who have received their booster shot do not need to quarantine following an exposure, but should wear a mask for 10 days after the exposure. For all those exposed, best practice would also include a test for SARS-CoV-2 at day 5 after exposure. If symptoms occur, individuals should immediately quarantine until a negative test confirms symptoms are not attributable to COVID-19.

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In the coming week, DOH anticipates that CDC will offer additional updated recommendations surrounding K-12 and high risk congregate settings such as nursing homes, homeless shelters, and correctional facilities.

For more information on the CDC's updated recommendations for COVID isolation and quarantine, please see CDC's Media Statement.

Vaccinations remain the best way for New Mexicans to protect themselves and their loved ones from COVID-19. The vaccines are safe, highly effective, and free. Booster shots will also help protect against the new omicron variant, and DOH encourages everyone 16 and older to get a booster shot as soon as possible. Children over the age of five who have not yet been vaccinated should start their two-shot series immediately.

To find vaccine locations near you, visit [vaccinenm.org](https://vaccinenm.org), [vaccines.gov](https://vaccines.gov), or call NMDOH's COVID-19 hotline at 1-855-600-3453, available every day from 8 AM to 8 PM. Language assistance is available.

New Mexicans who are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 or have been exposed to a COVID-positive person should get tested immediately. (Testing sites are listed at [findatestNM.org](https://findatestNM.org); New Mexicans can also order free at-home tests through Vault.) Symptoms of

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COVID-19 include fever, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, chills, repeated shaking with chills, gastrointestinal illness and new loss of taste or smell.

DOH continues to recommend limited travel and exposure to large crowds. Additionally, masking is required for all individuals when indoors.