



Erie County
Department of
Health



Public Health
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MEDIA RELEASE

November 13, 2020

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POSITIVE FOR COVID-19? ISOLATE AND TELL CLOSE AND HOUSEHOLD CONTACTS TO QUARANTINE

“We can stop community transmission of COVID-19, but we need your help.”

ERIE COUNTY, NY – New daily COVID-19 cases this week have been the highest seen within Erie County since the start of the pandemic, with few signs of slowing down soon.

Erie County Department of Health (ECDOH) contact tracers are working through a caseload that can only be described as crushing. “Our epidemiology team has added staff and shared some contact tracing tasks with the New York State Department of Health,” said **Commissioner of Health Dr. Gale Burstein**. “But even with that, there is a delay between when some people find out they have a positive COVID test result, when we can call them to explain isolation, and when we can notify their close contacts of the need to quarantine.”

Individuals who have been told of a **positive COVID test result** by their physician, pharmacy, health care facility or laboratory must **ISOLATE** for 10 days past the onset of symptoms or 10 days past the date of their positive test sample collection (if no symptoms).

Close contacts and household members of an individual with a positive test results must **QUARANTINE** for 14 days past the last date of exposure. Close contacts of a positive case should have a diagnostic COVID-19 test about 5 days after their last date of exposure. A negative diagnostic COVID-19 test does not end or shorten the quarantine period. Call (716) 858-2929 to schedule a free test through ECDOH. Call 1-888-364-3065 to schedule a free test through the New York State Department of Health at a site in downtown Buffalo. Other local sites are listed on a searchable online map at www.erie.gov/covidtestsites.

“ECDOH is asking physicians, pharmacies, healthcare organizations and any site that provides COVID diagnostic testing to help us,” **Dr. Burstein said**. “Educate your patients about how to safely isolate and quarantine, and why it is important for their household’s health and for the health of our community.”

continued

“Isolation and quarantine are designed to separate an individual from other people during a time when they could transmit disease,” **explained Dr. Burstein**. “This is among the most important tools we have to break the chain of transmission in a community, and right now Erie County is seeing evidence of uncontrolled community transmission. We can stop community transmission of COVID-19, but we need your help. We have to work hard to reduce the number of new infections.”

“Right now, we are asking employers whose employees tell them that they need to isolate or quarantine to give them the benefit of the doubt, and allow them to complete a full 14-days of quarantine,” **said Dr. Burstein**. “And please, do not encourage or suggest that employees come to work when sick. If you are sick, stay home from work, school and other activities.”

If you are in isolation and quarantine, take extra care if you live with individuals who are at high risk for COVID complications, including older adults, individuals with chronic medical conditions, and individuals with disabilities.

Isolation ([more from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#))

- Monitor your symptoms. If you have an emergency warning sign (including trouble breathing), seek emergency medical care immediately
- Stay in a separate room from other household members, if possible
- Use a separate bathroom, if possible
- Avoid contact with other members of the household and pets
- Don't share personal household items, like cups, towels, and utensils
- Wear a mask when around other people, if you are able to

Quarantine ([more from the CDC](#))

- Stay home for 14 days after your last contact with a person who has COVID-19
- Watch for fever (100.4°F), cough, shortness of breath, or other symptoms of COVID-19
- If possible, stay away from others, especially people who are at higher risk for getting very sick from COVID-19

Call your doctor with questions about your own health and for advice on managing symptoms. If you are having trouble breathing or are experiencing severe symptoms, call 9-1-1. Notify 9-1-1 that you are in isolation or quarantine for COVID-19.

Support for Basic Needs

Staying at home for an extended period, especially if one or more people in a household are ill, can make accessing basic needs like food and medicine a challenge. **If you are in isolation or quarantine and need help with basic needs, call 2-1-1 (www.211wny.org), or the Erie County COVID-19 Information Line at (716) 858-2929.** People who are unable to safely isolate or quarantine should call (716) 858-2929 to ask for assistance.

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