



## RECOMMENDED MINIMUM QUARANTINE TIMEFRAMES

**December 17, 2020**

### Background:

The incubation period of SARS-Cov-2 is between 2-14 days (median incubation is about 5 days). It is for this reason that CDC and NJDOH continue to recommend a 14-day quarantine period. This quarantine period for persons who might have been exposed to COVID-19 has proven to be an effective strategy to prevent further transmission.

For some individuals, however, a 14-day quarantine may impose a significant economic or other hardship in some circumstances. This may dissuade individuals from responding to contact tracer outreach or result in non-compliance with quarantine of any length.

On 12/2/20, CDC released [guidance](#) with options to shorten the quarantine time period, which, while it risks being less effective than the currently recommended 14-day quarantine, it may reduce the burden and increase willingness to adhere to public health recommendations.

The NJDOH COVID-19 Activity Level Index Report (CALI) provides information on COVID-19 transmission risk by region and statewide and characterizes risk as Very High (red), High (orange), moderate (yellow), or low (green). <https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/statistics/covid/> The following minimum quarantine recommendations are based on the level of COVID-19 transmission.

### NJDOH Recommendations:

1. High-Risk Congregate Care Settings: Persons who live or work in congregate settings that care for persons at high risk for severe complications (e.g., long-term care and assisted living facilities, group homes, correctional facilities) need to continue to quarantine for 14-days, unless staffing shortages would cause serious harm or danger to public health or safety. The 14 days should be followed in these settings at all times, regardless of COVID-19 transmission risk level.
2. Community Settings and Individuals:
  - a. When there is substantial COVID-19 community spread, defined as Very High (red) or High (orange) on the CALI report (by region), NJDOH recommends quarantine for 14 days *where feasible* to reduce the risk of spread of COVID-19 and particularly for persons who live with or care for persons at high risk of severe complications for COVID-19 (older adults, persons with underlying conditions or obesity, and pregnant women).
  - b. When COVID-19 transmission risk is Moderate (yellow) or Low (green) on the CALI report (by region), while a 14-day quarantine is preferred, CDC's recommended shortened quarantine timeframes are acceptable alternatives.

**Recommended Minimum Quarantine Timeframes by  
COVID-19 Regional Transmission Risk Level (CALI Score)<sup>1</sup>**

Low Risk	Moderate Risk	High Risk	Very High Risk
<i>14 days is always preferred as the best way to prevent COVID-19 transmission.</i>			
10 days without testing  OR  7 days with negative test results collected at 5-7 days	10 days without testing  OR  7 days with negative test results collected at 5-7 days	14 days for group settings and organized activities  14 days for individuals unless it causes <u>significant</u> economic or other hardship  <b>ONLY IF 14 days is <u>not feasible</u>, follow</b>  10 days without testing  OR  7 days with negative test results collected at 5-7 days	14 days for group settings and organized activities  14 days for individuals unless it causes <u>significant</u> economic or other hardship  <b>ONLY IF 14 days is <u>not feasible</u>, follow</b>  10 days without testing  OR  7 days with negative test results collected at 5-7 days

Community Settings & Organized Activities:

School and childcare administrators, employers, and individuals or entities having control over organized groups or activities (e.g., sports teams) should have a policy that defines the quarantine timeframe for their population (staff, students, athletes, etc.). NJDOH recommends that when COVID-19 transmission risk is High or Very High (orange or red CALI score), exposed close contacts quarantine for 14 days. When the COVID-19 transmission risk is Moderate or Low (yellow or green CALI score), the CDC recommended shortened timeframes are acceptable alternatives<sup>2</sup>. For organized activities that may take place in different regions of the state (e.g., sports team), the “home region” risk level where the group is primarily located can be used.

Individuals:

It is preferred that individuals not working at or attending group activities quarantine for 14 days. This is the safest way to protect family, friends, and community members, particularly if individuals will be in

<sup>1</sup> Excludes high-risk congregate care settings (e.g., long-term care and assisted living facilities, group homes, correctional facilities)

<sup>2</sup> If the quarantine period started when COVID-19 transmission risk is High or Very High, the 14 days should be completed even if the transmission risk changes to Moderate or Low during those 14 days.

contact with persons at high risk for severe COVID-19 illness or if the COVID-19 transmission risk is High or Very High (orange or red CALI score).

If a 14-day quarantine would pose a significant economic or other hardship<sup>3</sup>, if it will result in non-compliance with quarantine, or if the COVID-19 transmission risk is Moderate or Low (yellow or green CALI score), the CDC recommended shortened timeframes are acceptable. It is the individual's personal responsibility to determine if s/he is able to quarantine for 14-days, but they should comply with the minimum alternative timeframes. Note: individuals who work at or attend group activities in community settings should refer to those organization's policies.

#### **Quarantine Timeframes:**

- (1) A 14-day quarantine is preferred for all individuals and groups where feasible.
- (2) Acceptable Alternative Quarantine Timeframes (when COVID-19 transmission risk is Moderate or Low):
  - a. After Day 10 without testing **and** if no symptoms have been reported during daily monitoring.

OR

- b. After Day 7 if the individual tests negative with a viral test (molecular-PCR or antigen) between day 5-7 **and** if no symptoms were reported during daily monitoring.

*Note: The specimen must be collected between day 5-7 (not earlier than day 5), but quarantine cannot be discontinued earlier than after Day 7. The person should remain in quarantine until the results are received and are negative. If test results are delayed, quarantine should be continued until after Day 10.*

#### **Additional considerations:**

- Quarantine can be shortened only **if persons remain asymptomatic** throughout the shortened quarantine period; if they **continue to monitor for symptoms** through Day 14; and if they are counseled to follow COVID-19 prevention recommendations (e.g., social distancing, mask use, hand hygiene, cleaning and disinfection, avoiding crowds) through Day 14.
- Persons under quarantine should be advised that if they develop symptoms of COVID-19, they should immediately self-isolate and contact the local health department (LHD) [www.localhealth.nj.gov](http://www.localhealth.nj.gov) and their healthcare provider to report this change in clinical status.
- If an outbreak is reported in a community setting, contacts must quarantine for the full 14 days.

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<sup>3</sup> Examples of significant hardship include loss of income; inability to obtain food, medication or other essential items; inability to provide family members with essential transportation or other care services.

## References and Resources:

- CDC Options to Reduce Quarantine for Contacts of Persons with SARS-CoV-2 Infection Using Symptom Monitoring and Diagnostic Testing, 12/2/20: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/more/scientific-brief-options-to-reduce-quarantine.html>
- New Jersey COVID-19 Testing Site Finder: <https://covid19.nj.gov/pages/testing#test-sites>
- NJDOH COVID-19 Activity Level Index Report (CALI Report): <https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/statistics/covid/>