

COVID-19 What is Social Distancing and Self Quarantine?

Now that the new coronavirus and COVID-19, the illness it causes, are spreading among communities in the United States and other countries, phrases such as “social distancing,” and “self-quarantine”. What do they mean, and how might they apply to you, your family and your community?

What is social distancing?

While it may be disappointing to hear that so many places where people gather are closed, there is a public health reason for these measures. These cancellations help stop or slow down the spread of disease allowing the health care system to more readily care for patients over time.

Closing place where people gather is an example of **social distancing**. Social distancing is deliberately increasing the physical space between people to avoid spreading illness. Staying at least six feet away from other people lessens your chances of catching COVID-19.

Other examples of social distancing that allow you to avoid larger crowds or crowded spaces are:

- Working from home instead of at the office
- Closing schools or switching to online classes
- Visiting loved ones by electronic devices instead of in person
- Cancelling or postponing conferences and large meetings

What is self-quarantine?

People who have been exposed to the new coronavirus and who are at risk for coming down with COVID-19 might practice **self-quarantine**. Health experts recommend that self-quarantine lasts 14 days. Two weeks provides enough time for them to know whether or not they will become ill and be contagious to other people.

You might be asked to practice self-quarantine if you have been exposed to an infected person.

Self-quarantine involves:

- Using standard hygiene and washing hands frequently
- Not sharing things like towels and utensils
- Staying at home
- Not having visitors
- Staying at least 6 feet away from other people in your household

Once your quarantine period has ended, if you do not have symptoms, follow your doctor’s instructions on how to return to your normal routine.

What is isolation?

For people who are confirmed to have COVID-19, **isolation** is appropriate. Isolation is a health care term that means keeping people who are infected with a contagious illness away from those who are not infected. Isolation can take place at home or at a hospital or care facility. Special personal protective equipment will be used to care for isolated patients in health care settings.