

# COVID-19 Guidelines for the home quarantine for contacts

## Scope

*Quarantine is the separation (and restriction of activities) of well individuals who may have been exposed to COVID-19 from others.* The objective of quarantine is to monitor the individual for the development of symptoms ensuring the early detection of cases.

As of 3 September 2020, Papua New Guinea has 471 cases of COVID-19 with 5 deaths. Cases have been reported from 12 out of 22 provinces. It is expected that number of COVID-19 cases continue to increase; it is vital that health authorities consider quarantine of contacts of confirmed or probable COVID-19 cases in the home.

The purpose of this document is to guide Provincial Health Authorities on home quarantine measures for contacts of the confirmed or probable cases of COVID-19.

## Definitions

**Quarantine** is the separation (& restriction of activities) of well person who may have been exposed to COVID-19. Quarantine is different to isolation. Isolation is the separation of unwell people from healthy people to help stop the spread of infection.

**A contact** is a person in any of the following situations (from 2 days before and up to 14 days after the onset of symptoms in the confirmed or probable case of COVID-19):

- face-to-face contact with a probable or confirmed cases of COVID-19 (within 1 meter and for more than 15 minutes);
- direct physical contact with a probable or confirmed case of COVID-19
- direct care for an individual with probable or confirmed COVID-19 without using proper personal protective equipment

## Feasibility of home quarantine

Determining whether home as suitable for quarantine of contacts of COVID-19 cases is crucial. Health and local authorities and communities need to ensure that:

- that adequate food, water hygiene and communication provisions can be made for the quarantine period,
- the infection prevention control measures can be implemented at home, and
- monitoring the health of quarantined persons can be done during quarantine.

Below there are some considerations to be taken into account in implementing quarantine at home.

## Considerations for home quarantine

### Care-package

Authorities may need to support the contacts in the delivery of a “care-package” for the individuals / families to remain in their homes. The following items should be included:

- Hand soap and or alcohol-based hand-rub



- Fever reducing medicine such as paracetamol
- Disposable mask in case if quarantined person develops symptoms
- Disposable gloves/heavy duty gloves for cleaning
- Liquid bleach and soap / detergent for cleaning
- Thermometer (if available)

Personal items that may be needed throughout the quarantine period, such as a face towel, sanitary napkins, maternity pads should also be considered.

### *Where to quarantine in the home*

**Option 1:** If the contact lives on their own they can consider the whole house safe to quarantine in, including the garden. The important thing is keeping a distance of at least 1.5 m away from others all the time.

**Option 2:** If the contact lives with other family members the quarantined individual should stay, in a separate room. Where possible, the separate room should have windows which can be opened and can have natural flow of air. This will be the room where the contact will sleep, relax and eat their meals.

**Option 3:** If a separate room is not possible, allocate an area of the home, at least 1.5 meters (3 steps) from other people. This area should only be for the quarantined person. The quarantined person should sleep, relax and eat in this area. The person should make sure not to have close contact with any elderly or vulnerable members of the household.

#### **Key considerations for all options:**

The contact should not share personal items during this time; They should have their own linen for sleeping. The contact should also have their own cutlery and bowl for eating meals.

Close contact of any kind with the contact in quarantine should be avoided. This includes hugging, having intimate sexual relations and sleeping next to the contact. All household members should maintain distance of 1.5m from the individual throughout the quarantine period.

### *Caregiver for the contact in quarantine*

Individuals in quarantine may require support from a family member or friend to care for their daily needs. This may be for the elderly, frail or those that are dependent on others for their daily needs (such as cooking, washing and cleaning).

It is important to limit the number of caregivers in order to reduce the risk of transmission to many family members. There should be only 1 caregiver, the family / household should allocate this person carefully by ensuring they are healthy, with no underlying conditions. Caregiver should wear mask if distance of at least 1.5 m cannot be maintained, should practice good hand hygiene and cough etiquette and should have an understanding of how to get a medical review if the contact shows signs of sickness.

### *Handwashing, cough etiquette and distancing*



## Hand hygiene

All household members should understand the importance of hand hygiene. Hand hygiene includes either cleaning hands with soap and water or with an alcohol-based hand rub. Hands should be cleaned before meals, after using the toilet, after cleaning or putting out waste. Avoid touching the face, nose and mouth.

## Respiratory etiquette & masks

Everyone in the house should practice respiratory hygiene. This means covering your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze.

Asymptomatic contacts do not need to wear a mask unless a distance of 1.5m is not able to be maintained.

Fabric masks should be washed each day in detergent and hot water then dried in the sunshine.

If the contact develops a cough, fever, runny nose and/or feels unwell they should wear a mask to reduce transmission spread of any possible virus. The carer or patient should inform the health workers for review.

## Staying in the home

Quarantined person must not leave their home for the full duration of the quarantine.

Avoid sharing household items like dishes, drinking glasses, utensils, toothbrushes, clothes, pillows, bed linen, or towels with other family members. The contact should have their own supplies for this period of time.

## *Cleaning and disinfection*

Household surfaces should be wiped cleaned with detergent (or soap) and water each day. Surfaces include tables, door handles, bench tops and taps. It also includes items like mobile phones and remote controls.

Using diluted bleach to disinfect after cleaning with soap and water will make sure any virus or germs are removed from surfaces. This is the best way to prevent infection spread if someone becomes sick.

The bathroom and toilet should also be cleaned (with soap & water) & disinfected (with diluted 0.1% bleach) each day.

Sleeping mats should be cleaned and allowed to dry in the sunshine each day.

Clothes and linens should be washed using regular laundry soap/detergent and hot water. Hot water and a detergent/soap will remove most viruses.

## *Waste management*

Use a closed waste bin, if possible, with bin liners that can be sealed. Waste from the quarantined individual should be cleared from their quarantine area each day. Waste can be burnt, burning each day is encouraged to avoid waste staying in the home.

## *Food and water*

It is very important to consider how the contact or household will get food and water whilst they are quarantining at home. If the patient lives alone the community leaders or community members may need to support them by delivering groceries, vegetables, or meals. If several people in a household are in quarantine someone (who is not quarantine) should be allocated to bring essential items to the household each day.

It is very important the individuals in quarantine do not go outside of the boundaries of the house.



## **Visitor's**

There should not be routine family or friends visiting when someone is in quarantine in the home.

Visitors should be for essential reasons only, for the delivery of food, water or medicine only.

A designated drop off point should be identified outside of the house so that there is no direct contact with those in quarantine. Communication with family from a balcony to people in the garden for example is encouraged, as long as the physical distance of 1.5m minimum is maintained.

## **Monitoring the health of quarantined person**

Contact monitoring teams based within the PHA contact tracing team should follow up daily of persons who are quarantined for the duration of the quarantine period

- Screening of body temperature and symptoms can be done by quarantined person or caregiver. Quarantined person or caregiver need to be educated on how to use thermometer and monitor symptoms.
- Both quarantined persons and caregivers should understand the importance of quickly seeking medical care if they develop symptoms
- If quarantined person develops fever and respiratory symptoms (cough, sore throat, shortness of breath etc.), person or caregiver should call the COVID-19 toll-free hotline 1-800200 or inform PHA quarantine team
- If the quarantined person becomes symptomatic, they should wear a face mask.
- Rapid Response Team should collect nasopharyngeal swab and send to laboratory for assessment & diagnosis. While waiting for test results, the person with symptoms should be isolated at home. Upon confirmation of COVID-19 isolation at home or to designated health facility needs to be decided.
- Persons at higher risk of severe disease (individuals aged >60 years, with underlying medical conditions) may require more frequent monitoring or may require specific medical treatments

## **Psychological considerations**

When facilitating home quarantine consider the psychosocial needs are as they remain in the home? Regular phone calls or visits (from a safe distance) each day will be beneficial for the patient / family's well-being.

Consider the psychosocial needs of the other household members? What support is available to the individual or family in coping with the emotional impact of being quarantined for 14 days. Mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) must be available if there is a need.

## **Duration of home quarantine**

Contacts of COVID-19 cases are required to complete **14 days** quarantine from the last time they were exposed to the individual with COVID-19.

If the contact is assessed and has no symptoms at the end of the 14 days, they do not have to remain in quarantine.

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PAPUA NEW GUINEA  
JOINT AGENCY TASK FORCE  
NATIONAL CONTROL CENTRE FOR COVID-19  
As established under the National Pandemic Act 2020



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