COVID-19 FAQs

DEFINITIONS: What are COVID-19 key terms I should know?

- A close contact includes those within 6 feet of an infected person for more than 15 cumulative minutes.
- Physical distancing (social distancing) is for everyone. It means keeping people farther apart to prevent the virus from spreading in communities.
- Quarantine is for people who may have been exposed to the virus. It means keeping them physically apart from others in case they are infected (i.e., staying at home).
- Isolation is for people who have the virus. It means keeping them separated from people who don’t have it.

PROTECTION: How can I protect myself and others from getting COVID-19?

- Get a COVID-19 vaccine.

- When indoors in public spaces, consider wearing a mask that covers your nose and mouth. Choose a mask with two or more layers of washable, breathable fabric that fits snugly against the sides of your face.

- Stay at least 6 feet (about two arm lengths) from people who don’t live with you, particularly in crowded areas.

- Wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
The more people you are in contact with, the more likely you are to be exposed to COVID-19.

- Avoid crowds and indoor spaces as much as possible, particularly ones that aren’t well ventilated.

**SYMPTOMS: What are the symptoms of COVID-19? (Screening Checklist)**

COVID-19 Screening Checklist

- Do you have **new muscle aches** not related to another medical condition or another specific activity (e.g. due to physical exercise)?
- Do you feel like you may have a **temperature of greater than 100.0°F**?
- Do you have **sore throat, runny nose and/or congestion** not related to another medical condition (e.g. allergies)?
- Do you have a **new or worsening cough** that is not related to another medical condition?
- Do you have **shortness of breath** that is not attributable to another medical condition?
- Do you have **recent (<5 days) loss of smell and taste**?
- Do you have new onset of **vomiting or diarrhea** not related to another medical condition?
- Have you had **recent close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19**?

If you answered yes to any of the questions above, please do not attend class, work or other campus activities and contact your medical provider.

Campus Health can be reached through the [healthyheels.unc.edu Patient Portal](https://healthyheels.unc.edu) or by calling 919-966-2281.

[University Employee Occupational Health Clinic](https://healthyheels.unc.edu): 919-966-9119

**EXPOSURE: I don't have symptoms but I'm worried I might have been exposed. What do I do?**

You can always discuss your situation with a nurse at Campus Health by [messaging in the Patient Portal](https://healthyheels.unc.edu).
In general, asymptomatic individuals who believe they have been exposed but who have not been vaccinated will be advised to quarantine for 14 days through a telehealth visit. Those students living on-campus will be relocated to the quarantine residence hall.

**TESTING: When should someone consider being tested for COVID-19?**

Currently the Orange County Health Department, in connection with the University, is recommending that all students living in the Chapel Hill area be tested regularly.

The University has implemented a COVID-19 testing program with mandatory testing for some groups. This testing is for those students and staff without symptoms, who have not been close contacts of positive cases, and those who have not tested positive for COVID in the past 90 days. Visit Carolina Together Testing Program for more details.

Campus Health offers testing by appointment for those students who are having symptoms or who have been a close contact to someone with COVID. Those who are asymptomatic but are close contacts should be tested between days 5 and 7 after last known exposure. A negative test will not shorten the 14 day quarantine period.

Schedule by requesting an appointment through the patient portal or calling Campus Health to coordinate and facilitate your care.

If you believe you need to be tested for COVID-19, but are not living on or near campus, please visit this COVID-19 Test Finder to find a testing location in your area.

**POSITIVE RESULT: Should I let Campus Health know if I test positive for COVID-19, even if I’m not living on campus?**

Yes. Please message a nurse through the patient portal or call 919-966-2281 if you test positive for COVID-19 at a facility other than Campus Health as soon as possible after receiving your result. Students and post-docs who are living either on or off campus should let Campus Health know if they test positive.

**QUARANTINE / ISOLATION: When and how do I quarantine or isolate myself for COVID-19?**
Both isolation and quarantine mean staying physically apart from others to avoid the spread of infection.

Isolation is for those who have COVID-19 (or presume to have it based on symptoms and lack of vaccination). Those who test positive for COVID-19 or have COVID-19 symptoms but can recover at home need to isolate.

Quarantine is for unvaccinated people who have been exposed to the virus. Unvaccinated close contacts (have been within 6 feet of an infected person for more than 15 minutes cumulatively) of infected individuals should quarantine for 10 days after your last contact with a person who has COVID-19 and monitor for symptoms for 14 days. Consider being tested for COVID-19 between days 5 and 7 after last known exposure. Even if you test negative for COVID-19 or feel healthy, you should stay home and continue to monitor for symptoms since symptoms may appear 2 to 14 days after exposure to the virus.

Detailed instructions for Quarantine at UNC [8] and Isolation at UNC [9] are available. Students asked to quarantine or isolate for COVID-19 should connect with Campus Health if they are on or off campus. Campus Health will regularly communicate with students and can help coordinate testing, contact tracing, and on-campus services coordination as needed. Message Campus Health for advice at healthyheels.unc.edu [6] or call 919-966-2281.

In general:

- Stay home or in your assigned residence. Do not go to in-person work or school. Do not visit public areas.
- If you need items, request others pick them up for you or have them delivered.
- Frequently wash your hands with soap and water. Use hand sanitizer if soap and water is not available.
- Check your temperature twice daily. Keep a log of health symptoms including temperature, presence of cough, or trouble breathing.
- Campus Health will contact you daily throughout your quarantine or isolation.
- Details available at CDC.gov. [10]

Anyone who has completed quarantine or isolation should consider vaccination [11]. Those who have been fully vaccinated will not be required to quarantine if identified as an asymptomatic close contact.

**SUPPORT: How do I support a friend who is in quarantine or isolation?**
If you know someone struggling with COVID-related illness or quarantine, show them kindness.

- Listen with compassion.
- Be present. Call, text or video chat with them to let them know you are there to support them.
- Take cues about what you can do to best support them. Ideas:
  - Drop off food or drinks at their door.
  - Ask if they need any items the next time you go to the store.
  - Offer to run to the pharmacy for them.
  - Drop off or digitally send items you know they enjoy (magazines, comic books, craft supplies, music, etc).
  - Offer to do their yard work, take out their trash, or bring in their mail.
  - Offer to help with their pets.
  - Keep them informed with reliable news.
  - Ask about finances to see if they need support.
  - Help them create or maintain daily routine.
- Get creative and come up with ideas among mutual friends. Consider sending snail mail, playing online games together, watching a Netflix series together, or listening to the same audiobooks.
- Take care of yourself and your own mental health too.

**TRAVEL: I’m planning to travel. What do I need to consider?**

As you consider upcoming travel, check [CDC guidance](https://www.cdc.gov) and travel requirements for your destination as well as testing recommendations for air travel, if applicable. Consider getting vaccinated for COVID [11] before departure, and remember that you are not considered fully vaccinated until 14 days after you have completed the vaccine series.

Reduce your risk of being exposed to COVID in the two weeks before you travel and while traveling:

- limit the number of individuals you interact with
- limit the time and duration spent near other people
- be thoughtful about the location of interactions (outdoor is better than indoors) and
- practice the 3Ws:
  - wash your hands frequently
  - wear a face mask and
  - wait six feet from other people.
**Take a COVID-19 test prior to departure.** Free testing is offered on campus for students without symptoms nor exposure. Visit Carolina Together for details [5].

For international travel, Campus Health offers an International Travel Clinic [14] which provides up-to-date COVID test requirements and travel restrictions, along with a wide range of health-related travel information. You should also visit travel.state.gov [15] for detailed requirements for each country and the CDC website on international travel [16].

Remember that a negative test is not a free pass to skip other precautions. Testing as a sole strategy for COVID risk reduction doesn’t work well because it can take 2-14 days for someone who is exposed to SARS-CoV-2 to develop symptoms of COVID-19. It is recommended that individuals wait until ~4-5 days after being exposed to a case of COVID-19 to get tested, since before this point, the false negative rate is high. Many situations have included people getting tested a day or two before embarking on a trip or going to an event, only to have one of the attendees become positive during or just after the event, potentially infecting many people. You should still get tested before you travel or attend gatherings. A positive test should change holiday plans; a negative test, however, only gives you information for that point in time and doesn’t mean you will remain negative after that test. Even with a negative test result, continue to wear a mask and physically distance.

**MORE: Where can I learn more?**

Students may email covidcareforstudents@unc.edu [17] with questions or concerns.

The Carolina Together website [18] shows university plans and updates.


- Symptom monitoring form.pdf [20]
- Quarantine Instructions - Campus Health 5.28.21.pdf [8]
- Isolation Instructions - Campus Health 5.28.2021.pdf [9]

**Source URL:** https://campushealth.unc.edu/services/covid-19-services/covid-19-faqs

**Links**