

Brown County Health & Human Services

Public Health Division

Contact Tracing FAQ

Q: What is contact tracing?

A: Contact Tracing is a well-known method to control the spread of communicable diseases. Brown County Public Health utilizes contact tracing for all disease outbreaks in Brown County—COVID-19 is no different.

Q: How does contact tracing work?

A:

1. Brown County Public Health receives a notification in our Wisconsin Electronic Disease Surveillance System (WEDSS) informing us of a confirmed positive case.
2. The positive case is assigned to an investigator.
3. The investigator reaches out to the positive case to interview them and provide education to that individual and any close contacts.
4. The investigator reaches out to all close contacts to provide education.

Q: Who else is involved in this process?

A: Household members or other persons who are in a shared living unit are involved because they are considered close contacts. The investigator also collects information on non-household case contacts which may include work, friends, or other community members.

Q: How long does the contact tracing process take?

A: It can vary case by case. The investigator continues to follow up with the positive case until they are symptom free and/or isolation/quarantine is exhausted. On average, this process can take anywhere between 7-14 days.

Q: Who does contact tracing?

A: Brown County Public Health nurses, health aides and strategists make up our investigation team. Public Health also has assistance from Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) staff.

Q: Did Public Health have any help with contact tracing?

A: Yes. Over 30 volunteers from the Medical College of Wisconsin, University of Green Bay students, residents of Brown County, Health and Human Services employees. We also had Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) employees help as well as Centers for Disease



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Control and Prevention (CDC) staff help, De Pere Health Department and Oneida Nation Health Department assisted as well.

Q: What qualifications do you need to be a contact tracer?

A: Anyone with the appropriate background and skillset can be trained to be an effective contact tracer.

Q: I received notification that I tested positive, but still have not heard from Public Health. Why would that be?

A: Because of the high volume of cases in our area, BCPH is partnering with the DHS contact tracing team to help reach out to individuals who test positive. We work through cases as quickly as we can, but if there are a high volume of cases coming in there may be a delay. Continue to follow the isolation instructions given by your provider while waiting for someone to reach out to you. Please note that the call may be coming from a (920) or (608) area code. It is helpful if you have your voicemail set up and are prepared to answer a call from a number you don't know.

Q: My neighbor/friend/household member said they were tested but I haven't been contacted. What is my risk?

A: There are a couple reasons you may not have been contacted. First, you may not have been considered a close contact or you may not have been in contact with your neighbor during their infectious period. In either case you would just want to monitor yourself for signs and symptoms but would not need to quarantine. Second, we may not know that you are a close contact. If your neighbor did not name you as a close contact, we won't know about your exposure. If you are able, contact the person who you think you had close contact with. They can reach out to Public Health to add you to their investigation if needed. Please follow quarantine instructions until someone reaches out to you. Please note, the call may come from a (920) or (608) area code. Third, we may have tried and were unable to reach you. Please make sure your voicemail is set up and be prepared to answer a call from a number you don't know.

Q: How is Brown County Public Health assessing my risk/level identifying me to be in isolation or quarantine?

A: Isolation is for those who have tested positive for or are suspected of having COVID-19. These people are likely infectious, and we want to protect others from them. Because of this they are asked to



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separate themselves from household members, if possible, and not to go out in public unless it is a medical emergency.

Quarantine is for those who are close contacts to a case of COVID-19 and are not showing any symptoms. We are asking that they stay home to keep them from accidentally spreading COVID-19 to others before they know they are infectious. Close contacts are anyone who has spent more than 15 minutes within 6 feet of someone who has tested positive, had physical contact with someone who has tested positive (hug, handshake, etc.) or come into contact with a positive individual's respiratory secretions (coughed/sneezed on, shared food/drinks/dishes with) during their infectious period. The infectious period is 48 hours before symptoms or a positive test until at least 10 days after symptom onset or test date. If your contact doesn't fit those criteria, it was likely a low risk exposure. You don't need to quarantine, but you should monitor yourself for symptoms.



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