



**Stay safe... stay healthy... be well.**

## *Wednesday Wellness Message (11/18/20)*

*This week's wellness message: "I was exposed to someone with COVID.*

*Should I get tested? When? Should I quarantine? How long?"*

***Here are a few pieces of information that may be helpful as COVID cases increase in our community.***

- 1) The CDC defines **EXPOSURE** as being closer than 6 feet from someone for 15 or more minutes within a 24-hour period during the 48 hours before they began to experience symptoms or were tested. They do not make the distinction between masked or not, whether or not barriers are up, indoors vs. outdoors, or what kind of activity the infected person was engaged in (singing, coughing), but any of those factors could make transmission more or less likely. For instance, being in a car without a mask with someone who is talking for just five minutes would easily do it. [Exposure is also triggered by being coughed or sneezed on, sharing eating/drinking utensils, hugging/kissing & caregiving.]
- 2) If you have been exposed you must **QUARANTINE** for 14 days. **PERIOD**. Go to the CDC website or call your health department for more details. A negative test at any point during this quarantine period **DOES NOT END THE NEED TO QUARANTINE**. Generally you will be contacted by someone from the health department (a contact tracer) to discuss your risk and next steps, but given the steep rise we're experiencing, and reluctance/possible inability to give a tracer accurate information, don't assume that if you haven't been contacted you are in the clear.
- 3) If you or your health care provider feel you need to be tested, **TIMING** is important. Do not get tested the day or two after an exposure... even if you were infected by that person it's too soon to register a positive result. The most accurate results for PCR tests will be about 7 days after infection—before that, the false negative rate is too high.
- 4) You can get a **PCR TEST** at pop-up **LOCATIONS** around the state or register online to be tested at CVS or Rite Aid at no cost. Depending on your insurance you may have other free or low-cost options at local health care facilities and providers. This test averages 2 to 4 days for results. This list is not exhaustive; a quick internet search or call to your doctor will give you all your options. We will have locations and information on our website soon as well: [www.ursulineministries.org](http://www.ursulineministries.org)
- 5) A **RAPID TEST** has limited usefulness in this context. However, they can be helpful for more quickly confirming that someone who has symptoms is positive and for more large-scale screening of high-risk populations, like weekly testing of nursing home staff, for instance. They are not as sensitive as a PCR test, and since you must quarantine for 14 days anyway following a true exposure, it really doesn't make sense to get a rapid test in most cases (unless you are symptomatic). A positive rapid test must be followed up with a PCR test for confirmation.

Finally, these next weeks are critical. Stay home without visitors as much as you can. Mask, distance, practice good hand hygiene, air it out. Assume that **EVERYONE** has it. Make a list of all the people you spend time within a given week. If you get a call telling you that one of them tested positive this week, would you need to quarantine?

***Stay safe. Stay healthy. Be well.***