[](https://www.hse.ie/eng/)**our health service**

**Close contact**

This is only a guide but close contact can mean:

* spending more than 15 minutes of face-to-face contact within 2 metres of someone who has COVID-19, indoor or outdoor
* living in the same house or shared accommodation as someone who has COVID-19
* sitting within 2 seats of someone who has COVID-19 on public transport or an airplane

Spending more than 2 hours in an indoor space with someone who has COVID-19 will sometimes count as close or casual contact. This could be an office or a classroom. But it will depend on the size of the room and other factors. Public health doctors or [contact tracers](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/testing/contact-tracing.html) will let you know if you are at risk during contact tracing and public health risk assessments.

**How you'll know if you are a close contact**

You'll usually find out if you are a close contact from the:

* [contact tracing team](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/testing/contact-tracing.html)
* [COVID Tracker app](https://covidtracker.gov.ie/?utm_source=covid_tracker&utm_medium=app&utm_campaign=in_text%20)
* public health team investigating confirmed cases within a specific setting. For example, a nursing home or workplace

If the person who tested positive had symptoms, the people they were in close contact with 48 hours before they developed symptoms are contacted.

The person may have been tested because they were a close contact themselves, but had no symptoms. In this case, the people they were in close contact with 24 hours before they had their test will be contacted.

**What to do if you are a close contact**

If you are a close contact you need to:

* [get tested for COVID-19](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/testing/how-to-get-tested.html)
* [restrict your movements for 14 days](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/managing-coronavirus-at-home/if-you-live-with-someone-who-has-coronavirus.html#restrict) - do this from when you were last in contact with that person.

You must do this even if your test comes back negative. This is because it can take up to 14 days for the virus to show up in your system after you have been exposed to it.

If you develop [symptoms of COVID-19](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/symptoms.html), you will need to [self-isolate](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/managing-coronavirus-at-home/self-isolation.html).

**If you are**[**caring for someone who cannot self-isolate**](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/managing-coronavirus-at-home/self-isolation.html#Caring-for-someone-in-self-isolation)**, you and the rest of the household should restrict your movements for 17 days**

You can become a close contact on more than one occasion. You will need to restrict your movements each time.

If you are an essential healthcare worker, ring your manager and occupational health department. Do not go to work until you have spoken to them.

**Getting a test**

If our [contact tracing team](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/testing/contact-tracing.html) contact you, they will arrange a test.

**Second tests for close contacts**

You may get a second test even if your first test is negative. This is because it can take up to 14 days for the virus to show up in your system after you have been exposed to it. You will need to continue to restrict your movements, even if your first test was negative.

A contact tracer will ask you for the date that you last had contact with a positive case. You may be invited for a second test 7 days after this date. Your contact tracer will tell you if you need a second test.

If you do not know when your last contact took place, the contact tracer will record the date of the interview as the last date of contact. Your second test will be for 7 days after this date.

If you are not a close contact and your GP refers you for a test (separate to contact tracing), you will just get one test. In this case, you will not get a second test.

**Follow up from contact tracer**

During the 14 days you are restricting your movements a contact tracer will text or phone you to check if you have any symptoms. If you develop any symptoms of COVID-19, call your GP.

**If you test positive and have no symptoms**

If you were tested because you are a close contact, you may have no symptoms. If you test positive, you should [self-isolate](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/managing-coronavirus-at-home/self-isolation.html) for 10 days from the date of your test.

**Living with someone who is a close contact**

You do not need to restrict your movements if you live with or have been in contact with someone who is a close contact and who has no symptoms. You can continue to go to work, school, preschool or childcare as long as you also have no symptoms.

If the close contact develops symptoms, they will need to [self-isolate](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/managing-coronavirus-at-home/self-isolation.html) and phone a GP. You will need to restrict your movements.

You will become a close contact yourself if they test positive for COVID-19. You will then need to restrict your movements.

Living with someone who is a close contact may put you at risk of catching COVID-19 if they become unwell. Follow the advice about [protecting yourself and others from COVID-19](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/protect-yourself-and-others.html).

[Read more about when you might become a close contact and what you will need to do](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/close-contact-and-casual-contact.html#close).

**Casual contact**

This is only a guide but casual contact can mean:

* spending less than 15 minutes of face-to-face contact within 2 metres of an infected person, indoor or outdoor
* being in the same room as an infected person for less than 2 hours
* being on public transport or an airplane with an infected person but not sitting near them

Spending more than 2 hours in an indoor space with a person who has COVID-19 will sometimes count as casual contact. This could be an office or a classroom. But it will depend on the size of the room and other factors. Public health teams who risk asses or contact tracers will let you know if you are at risk during contact tracing.

**What to do if you are a casual contact**

You do not need to [restrict your movements](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/managing-coronavirus-at-home/if-you-live-with-someone-who-has-coronavirus.html), but you should continue to follow the advice on how to [protect yourself and others](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/protect-yourself-and-others.html).

If you are a casual contact, you do not need to be tested. But you should know the [symptoms of COVID-19](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/symptoms.html) and be aware that you may develop them.

**If you develop COVID-19 symptoms**

If you develop [symptoms of COVID-19](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/symptoms.html), you will need to [self-isolate](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/managing-coronavirus-at-home/self-isolation.html) and phone your GP straight away to get a test.

Other people you live with will need to [restrict their movements](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/managing-coronavirus-at-home/if-you-live-with-someone-who-has-coronavirus.html#restrict).