

Maryland COVID-19 & Contact Tracing Business FAQs

Contact tracing involves a statewide effort to identify individuals who have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19. Employees working at various companies and types of businesses may be contacted as a result of contact tracing. Some questions employers might have include:

What is contact tracing?

Contact tracing is an essential tool used to decrease the spread of infectious disease. It has been used effectively during other public health emergencies. Contact tracing is the process of identifying people who may have come into close contact with an individual who is ill with COVID-19 and letting them know they may have been infected.

How does contact tracing work?

If someone tests positive for COVID-19, the local health department where they live will call them and ask for the names and contact information of all the people they may have had close contact with (generally, more than 15 minutes of contact at a distance of less than 6 feet) since their test or about two days before their symptoms started.

If they have close contacts at work, those close contacts (whether work-related, family or friends) may then also be contacted and encouraged to get a test and to isolate at home for a period up to two weeks.

Will the local health department contact the employer of people who are contacted?

Not usually. There are so many people being tested, in most cases employers will not be contacted about individuals, especially if they live in different jurisdictions.

When might a company be called about COVID-19 exposures at work?

If the health department observes that 5 or more employees in the same company have tested positive for COVID-19, the health department may contact the employer to determine whether a workplace exposure has occurred and what steps can be taken to prevent future exposures.

In some cases, when a local health department is told by an employee as part of the contact tracing process that several exposures could have occurred in a workplace, the department may contact the employer to assist in the contact tracing process.

If someone says they were exposed to COVID-19 at a business as a customer, what does the health department do?

If someone who tests positive says they were exposed at a particular business, the local health department will generally try to understand how the exposure might have occurred. Because there are many places where people can be exposed, the health department is primarily interested in who may have been exposed to the individual, not where that person's exposure occurred.

What if an employee who is contacted has to be at work?

If an employee has tested positive for or been diagnosed with COVID-19, that employee should not be at work until released from quarantine by a medical provider or according to CDC guidelines. Contacts of COVID-19 cases should also be encouraged to isolate at home and be tested to prevent exposures and slow the spread of COVID-19. Employers should use telework and other practices whenever possible to allow employees to continue their essential work. Employers in critical infrastructure should consult the CDC guidance related to essential employees and the [local health department](#).

Can someone who has tested positive or is a contact of someone who has tested positive work from home?

This depends on the policies of the company. The health department encourages employers to have flexible policies regarding work and telework to minimize opportunities for additional exposures. This reduces the risk of further transmission.

Additional Resources

Visit coronavirus.maryland.gov or open.maryland.gov/backtobusiness for accurate, up-to-date information about COVID-19 and contact tracing. Visit <https://coronavirus.maryland.gov/pages/lhd-resources> for local health department phone numbers.



Respond: Answer the call and stop the spread.

- Answer and/or return any calls from “MD COVID.”
- Stop the spread by following the guidelines provided on the call.
- Spread the word, not the virus. Let your community know how important it is.



Connect: You Have the Power to Help Protect Your Community.

- Help contact tracers connect to others who may have been exposed.
- Stay connected with contact tracer and monitor symptoms.



Recover: Healing at Home. Healing Your Community.

This is not just about getting back to normal—it’s about getting better. If we work together, we can emerge stronger.



@MDHLaboratories



@MDHealthDept