

CORONAVIRUS • COVID-19

WHAT IS CONTACT TRACING?

There are many steps we can take together to control the spread of COVID-19. We often hear about the importance of wearing masks, washing hands, and maintaining six feet of physical distance from others whenever possible.

Some of the few tools healthcare and public health officials have to help control spread of the virus include testing, isolating individuals with COVID-19 infections, and contact tracing. Why is contact tracing important?

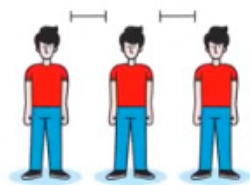
When doing contact tracing, a health professional will interview someone who is known to have an infectious disease to identify where they have been and who they may have been in contact with during their infectious period. The individual with the infectious disease is called the “index” case. There are two types of contacts with index cases—close contacts and general population contacts.

Close contacts are typically defined as anyone who has been less than six feet from an index case for more than 15 minutes. They could also be people who were coughed or sneezed on by the index case, or someone who was in very close proximity to the index case with minimal air circulation for an extended period of time, such as a small airplane ride.

To prevent further spread of COVID-19, we ask all close contacts identified through tracing to quarantine for two weeks (from the date of the last close encounter with the index case), because it can take that long after exposure to the virus for a close contact to develop symptoms of their own if they were infected. Someone from YKHC will call close contacts each day to see how they are doing, and what support they may need while on quarantine.

General population contacts are individuals who may have been around the index case during their infectious period, but not close enough to be considered close contacts. General population contacts are advised to monitor themselves for symptoms for two weeks and wear a mask whenever they're in public, but are not required to quarantine like close contacts.

YKHC's Office of Environmental Health (OEH) is assisting the State of Alaska with contact tracing when someone in the YK Delta tests positive for COVID-19. These calls can often feel invasive and it can be frustrating not to be told where you were exposed or who the index case was that you were around. We recognize these calls are not easy. The trained team from OEH does everything possible to protect your identity and the identity of the index case, but that information is withheld to protect the privacy of everyone involved.



Social Distancing



Widespread Testing



Contact Tracing