

## COVID-19 Quarantine, Isolation, and Social Distancing

### What do these terms mean? Why are they so important to stop the spread of COVID-19?

Information on Coronavirus (COVID-19) is dominating the news and social media sites. Despite all the other news out there, keep this in mind: the best thing you can do to stay healthy and to help your community stay healthy is to stay home. If you do leave your home or room, practicing the social distancing steps we all keep hearing about – wear a mask or maintain a distance of six feet away from others, is your daily goal. Keep an eye of your temperature and watch out for other symptoms. Wash your hands frequently or use hand sanitizer. If those behaviors don't keep you virus-free, then understanding our quarantine and isolation plans will be important.

### Why are quarantining, isolating, or social distancing so important?

In the U.S., testing got off to a slow start, limiting efforts to isolate those with the COVID-19 disease. Public health experts now say the most important goal is to slow the spread of the coronavirus so that the number of people who require medical attention doesn't overwhelm hospitals. If it's determined you have had close contact with someone infected with the coronavirus or if you've been diagnosed yourself, it is important that you listen to instructions from your health department. Close contact is defined as being within approximately 6 feet of someone with COVID-19 for a prolonged period of time (greater than 15 minutes). That includes if you are living with, visiting or sharing a healthcare waiting area or room with someone with COVID-19, or if you have been coughed or sneezed on by someone with the disease.

### Social Distancing

We are all constantly reminded of the importance and the multiple decision we make every day to maintain social distance. Remember, while you may not feel sick, the possibility of being a carrier exists. Yes, we know these measures are an inconvenience, but protecting members of our community who are more vulnerable to COVID-19 than others is the ultimate goal. We are all in this together.

### What does quarantine mean?

The word quarantine doesn't have to be a scary thing. It is an effective way to protect the public. Governments use quarantines to stop the spread of contagious diseases. Quarantines are for people who have been identified as a close contact to someone that has tested positive for COVID-19. A quarantine keeps these people away from others so they don't unknowingly infect anyone. This is contrasted with "isolation" which is reserved for individuals who are contagious (see below).

Quarantine is what you do when someone you're close to (a roommate, someone you've been in close contact with who tests positive, and other such times) tests positive. A member of the Health Department or a medical professional will tell you that you need to quarantine.

Our first, best advice is this: go home if you can. If this is an option, go home. It does mean putting your family at risk, but you will have much better access to food, your belongings, your 'at home' doctor, and a sense of normalcy (to the extent that being stuck at home because you've maybe been exposed to a virus that has created a pandemic is normal).



If you can't leave campus,

- We will assign a room to you. It might be your room in Agassiz (not usual, but it could be); it could be a different room. It is quite unlikely we'll leave you in the same room in Berg or Birkelo. We will have cleaned the room before you moved in, but keep in mind it's in your best interest to fanatically clean while you're there. We'll arrange a "get out of your room/walk around" time(s) for you, and we'll give you instructions for things like laundry and trash. We'll bring your food and try to accept special requests.

Quarantines can be tough, but there are some steps for you to remember.

- Focus on what you can control: Avoid leaving your room unless absolutely necessary. Keep up on your school work, communicate with professors and university staff – and friends - electronically, and under no circumstances should you attend public events or gatherings.
- Use, keep, and take care of your own stuff: Don't swap unwashed dishes, eating utensils, towels, or bedding with other people during the quarantine.
- Wash, rinse, repeat: Hygiene is an integral part of this, whether you're at home, in your 'regular' room, or in a temporary assignment. Frequent hand washing should be your first line of defense when under quarantine. Wipe surfaces with cleaners daily. And don't forget to cough or sneeze into your elbows – then wash up – or a tissue that you then immediately throw away.
- Call ahead when you go to the doctor: Staff from the health department will check in with you, but you may also need to see your doctor. Call ahead before you visit any clinic or doctor's office. That office will have a protocol for you to follow that prevents others from getting infected.

### **What's the difference between isolation and quarantine?**

There are some limited, technical issues between the same, but functionally 'isolation' and 'quarantine' both mean that you're in a room without physical social interaction. Isolation is the status for those who are *already* sick. Staying in isolation keeps infected people away from healthy people, and this will prevent the sickness from spreading. **You will be mandated to isolate if you test positive for the coronavirus (COVID-19).**

If this happens, again, our first, best advice is this: go home if you can. If this is an option, go home. It does mean putting your family at risk, and for some people either that or travel issues will detract from the benefits of going home. Still, you will have much better access to food, your belongings, your 'at home' doctor, and a sense of normalcy (to the extent that being stuck at home because you've contracted a virus that has created a pandemic is normal).

If you can't leave campus, we'll use the same protocol we identified above. We need you to, as well.

### Contract Tracing

Additionally, when you test positive, someone from the University or from the Health Department will ask for your help and then will call your close contacts. This process is called contact tracing. They notify your contacts letting them know it's possible they have been exposed to a known case.

Keep in mind you could very well be contacted by a contract tracer, and they could provide you the instructions to quarantine. In either case, the contract tracer will provide you with instructions for next steps.

### **Cooperating with authorities**

Complying with quarantine, isolation, social distancing, and other public health mandates will help slow — and eventually stop — the spread of contagious diseases. We understand that being cooped up inside may seem unbearable. But the time will pass, and **quarantining, isolating, and social distancing** will save lives.