

June 8, 2020

CONTACT TRACING VITAL TO PUBLIC HEALTH RESPONSE



Contact:

Kevin Watler
Public Information Officer
Florida Department of Health in Hillsborough County
kevin.watler@flhealth.gov

Hillsborough County, Fla.— Contact tracing infected individuals and close contacts is critical to help slow the transmission of COVID-19. Everyone needs to work together with the Florida Department of Health (DOH) contact tracers.

In every COVID-19 epidemiological investigation, all individuals that may have been exposed are notified and given the proper guidance in order to care for themselves and to protect others.

People Who Have Been Diagnosed

- A DOH contact tracer will ask a series of questions that helps determine who you've been in contact with and, and ask you to stay at home to self-isolate. Unless you give permission, your name will not be revealed to those you came in contact with, even if they ask.
- The health department will ask you to stay at home and **self-isolate**. Self-isolation means staying at home in a specific room away from other people and pets, and using a separate bathroom, if possible. This is critical to protecting those who you live with as well as your community. It also helps slow the spread of COVID-19 and can help keep your friends and neighbors healthy. Those who are unable to safely isolate may be eligible to stay in a hotel rented by Hillsborough County until fully recovered.

Close Contacts

- If you have been in close contact with someone with COVID-19, a DOH contact tracer will call to inform you that you've been exposed. They will ask you to stay at home and self-quarantine. Close contact means you were within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes. Self-quarantine means staying home, monitoring yourself, and maintaining social distancing (at least 6 feet from others at all times). You should remain in a specific room separate from other non-exposed people and pets in your home, and use a separate bathroom, if possible. You should stay at home and self-quarantine for 14 days, starting from the most recent day that you were possibly exposed to COVID-19. The contact tracer will inform you of the dates of your self-quarantine.
- If you need to be around other people or animals in or outside of the home, wear a cloth face covering. This will help protect the people around you. If you need support or assistance with self-quarantine, DOH-Hillsborough will work with the county to provide assistance.

How You Can Help

- Pick up the phone when your health department calls.
- Follow health department guidance.
- Notify your healthcare provider if you become ill.
- Call your healthcare provider if you start to feel ill and you have not been tested for COVID-19.
- If you have been in close contact with someone with COVID-19, you should stay at home and self-quarantine for 14 days, starting from the most recent day that you were possibly exposed to COVID-19. Monitor yourself, and maintain social distancing (at least 6 feet) from others at all times.
- Notify those who you had close contact with recently if you become ill.
- Know what symptoms mean you need to go to the hospital right away.
- Seek medical care if symptoms become severe. Severe symptoms include trouble breathing, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, confusion, inability to wake or stay awake, or bluish lips or face.
- **The bottom line:** Making a choice to help your health department in the fight against COVID-19 keeps you, your family, and your community safe.