



B O S T O N

Prevent the Spread of Germs

Home Isolation and Quarantine

What is home isolation?

A person may be placed on home isolation if they have a contagious illness. Public health officials will often isolate people to prevent a contagious illness from spreading to others. Isolation means staying at home, not going outside, not going to work, school or other public places, and not meeting with other people. While at home, the ill person should try to stay away from other household members as much as possible.

How long does a person have to stay on home isolation?

The time spent in isolation will be different for every disease. Instruction on how long to remain on isolation will be provided by your healthcare provider or the Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC).

What is quarantine?

A person may be placed on quarantine if they have been exposed to someone with a contagious illness. The purpose of quarantine is to stop the spread of disease by separating those who have been potentially exposed to a contagious illness and may be infected, but do not yet feel ill. Quarantine means staying at home (not going outside not going to work, school or other public places and not meeting with other people) until the public health officials are sure that the person is not infected. Although a person exposed to a contagious illness may feel well today, they could become ill in a few days and can spread the virus even when feeling well.

How long does a person have to stay on home quarantine?

The time spent in quarantine will be different for every disease. During this time, someone from public health may call the exposed person to see how they are doing. While on quarantine, a person must stay inside and not go to work school or visit anyone until off quarantine. It is advised to minimize visitors while on quarantine because the goal is to protect others.

What will happen if a person develops symptoms while in quarantine?

If a person on quarantine becomes ill in Boston, they should call the Boston Public Health Commission at (617) 534-5611 or primary care doctor. If symptoms are severe and need immediate attention, call 911.

How can a person ill with the flu or exposed to the flu prevent spreading the illness to others?

- The isolated or quarantined person should stay at home and try to keep at least 3 feet away from others. If possible, the ill person should stay in one room with the door closed to separate themselves from healthy family members.
- Do not have visitors (unless needed- for example if someone is bringing necessary food or medicine).
- Use a clean tissue to cover the nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing.

- All household members, including the sick person, should wash their hands frequently using soap and warm water or an alcohol based hand gel.
- Wash hard surfaces and items handled by the isolated/quarantined person thoroughly with a disinfectant such as Lysol or 10% bleach solution (bleach solution: 1½ cups bleach per 1 gallon of water).
- Keep personal items, such as towels, separate from the rest of the family.
- Do not share dirty eating utensils or drinks.
- Dishes and laundry should be washed with soap and warm water as usual.
- Healthy household members who are living with someone who is isolated, should remain on quarantine until advised otherwise by the Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC).

*For more information, please contact
Boston Public Health Commission
Communicable Disease Control
(617) 534-5611 or www.bphc.org/cdc*