



COVID-19 – Standards for Isolation of confirmed cases of COVID-19 and Quarantine of their contacts

Applicability

The following standards are issued under the Public Health Act Chapter 465 of the Laws of Malta and require strict adherence. Failure to adhere to these standards will result in enforcement procedures, as provided by the Act and the subsidiary legislation.

The applicable legislation is SL 465.30 (Self-Isolation of Diagnosed Persons Order, 2020) for persons who are positive for COVID-19 virus.

1.0 Isolation requirements & options for ‘early-release’ of a person infected with SARS-CoV-2 virus (Positive Case)

1.1 Persons who test positive for COVID-19 – the standard isolation period is 10 days from date of swab¹

1.2 The early release is effective for 7 days isolation from date of swab provided that on the 7th day of isolation the person undergoes an official swab test (carried out by a health professional) that results negative.

1.3 If the test taken on the 7th day results positive, the person is required to complete the full 10 days of isolation

This swab test must be a Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) performed at any registered rapid testing centre or licenced Lab on Day 7 in compliance with the Standards on the use of Point-of-Care Rapid Antigen Tests for SARS-CoV-2. Self tests cannot be used for early release.

If a negative, ‘non-reactive’ result is obtained on DAY 7 the contact may leave isolation as of 00.01hrs on the 8th day. Early release only applies if the positive person has no symptoms for the last 3 days of their isolation. If the positive case still has symptoms as of the last day of isolation, then s/he should remain in self-isolation until 24 hours after symptoms resolve.

¹ Date of swab refers to the date the official swab was taken and is considered as DAY 0. Start counting days in isolation from the following day.

If the RAT test result is positive ('reactive') then the individual must remain in isolation till the end of the 10-day isolation period (can leave isolation as of 00.01hrs on Day 11).

2.0 Persons living in the same household with the Positive Case (Household Contacts)

Household contacts of a positive case, DO NOT need to quarantine. .

They are recommended to wear a mask for 10 full days when around other persons inside the home or when in contact with other persons in closed environments.

Household contacts should self-monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 and are advised to test themselves 3 days following the date of the positive test result or start of symptoms (whichever came first) of the positive person with whom they live, in order to determine whether they have been infected.

They should also isolate themselves and test if at any point they are to become symptomatic. In view of the close contact involved in shared living spaces, household members of positive cases have an increased risk of becoming infected.

In order to prevent spread to other members of the household, persons infected with COVID-19 should sleep in separate rooms where this is possible, use separate bathrooms or ensure they are the last person to use the bathroom, which is cleaned after use. Using a mask within the household (both the person with COVID-19 and also the household members) where physical separation is not possible or when tending to a sick person, keeping one's distance and washing one's hands will minimise the risk of spread within the home together with good ventilation, cleaning of surfaces and frequently touched areas.

3.0 Other Contacts

No other persons who were in close contact with the positive case need to undergo any period of mandatory quarantine, irrespective of their vaccination status or the proximity of contact. If one is informed that they have been in close contact with a person who tested positive for COVID-19, it would be a good practice to self-monitor for any symptoms of COVID-19 and isolate and test if one had to become symptomatic.

Even if one remains well (asymptomatic), a test carried out at least 3 days after the last exposure should indicate whether one has contracted COVID-19 infection from the exposure or not. One is advised to be particularly vigilant with mitigation measures during this period such as masking indoors, keeping an adequate physical distance from others and avoiding close contact with medically vulnerable persons for 10 days from the last known exposure.

4.0 Quarantine for patients/ residents in hospital or a residential home

Patients/ residents in hospital or a residential setting will NOT be required to quarantine if they are exposed to a positive case for the duration that they are patients/residents in the hospital or residential setting.

However, patients/residents identified as close contacts of a positive case by the Infection Control team of the entity, must be monitored on a daily basis for any signs or symptoms of COVID-19 during the subsequent 5 days and a swab test taken immediately if such signs or symptoms are identified.

Furthermore, even if no signs or symptoms develop, a swab should always be taken on the 3rd day after the last exposure to the positive person, with the day of exposure being considered DAY 0.

Such contacts must wear a medical grade mask during the aforementioned 5 days, whenever they are in proximity of another patient/resident, visitor or healthcare provider. They should be isolated immediately if, at any point, they test positive for COVID-19.

5.0 Important note on official documentation regarding mandatory isolation

The notification of mandate for self-isolation of positive cases is issued through the official notification of the swab result. No formal isolation/quarantine letters or release letters will be sent for the positive case. The test result is considered the isolation mandate.

The negative test result/results for those opting for early release from isolation based on testing (as per above), together with the positive test result/isolation notification should be made available to employers' human resources representatives or administrative officers who may request this of the person in self-isolation in order to verify compliance with these Standards.