



PITTSFIELD BOARD OF HEALTH

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COVID 19 GUIDANCE FOR EMPLOYERS AND INDIVIDUALS

It's important to note the difference between **isolation** and **quarantine**.

- **Isolation** is for people who are COVID positive, requiring more strict requirements.
- **Quarantine** is for people who are close contacts of a positive case, but have not tested positive themselves yet. They are usually awaiting test results, or awaiting testing.
- **IF THEY TEST POSITIVE, THEY SWITCH FROM QUARANTINE TO ISOLATION.**
- It is also important to understand what a close contact is. A close contact is someone who has been **6' or closer for a cumulative 15 minutes or more WITHIN A 24 HOUR TIME PERIOD to a known COVID positive person.**
- On May 29, 2021, all mandated regulations imposed on businesses, etc. were lifted, and changed to "best practice". MDPH and the Pittsfield Health Department recommend doing these things at the very minimum. **Example: People who are vaccinated who go out in public do not need to wear a mask. Unvaccinated-people should wear a mask in public places. This is just an example. The full "best practices" guidelines can be found here:** <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/reopening-mandatory-safety-standards-for-workplaces>
- These are **recommendations, not regulations. Businesses are NOT mandated to follow best practice standards as outlined by MDPH, but it is highly recommended at the very minimum by MDPH and the Pittsfield Board of Health.**
- Employers have the right to go above and beyond the recommendations of MDPH, and set their own, more strict policies. For example, if the "best practice" from MDPH say that vaccinated patrons and employees do not need to wear a mask, and unvaccinated patrons and employees must wear a mask, and you feel that is "not enough", you can change it to all employees and patrons must wear a mask to enter your business if you feel more comfortable doing that. This is just an example of an employer setting more strict policies than what MDPH recommends. There could be many other more strict policies that can be implemented. The Pittsfield Board of Health can help by providing statistics, or answering questions about trends in our area to assist employers with decision making. We cannot make decisions for you, but can provide information for you to make an informed decision about policy making.
- There are still mandates in place for reporting COVID cases in the workplace. **All employers MUST report COVID cases in the work place to their Local Board of Health (LBOH) where these employers are located. Any employer that is licensed with the EEC is also required to report COVID cases to them, as well as their Local Board of Health. Please note: the mandate to report cases should be reported to the Local Board of Health where your business is.**

- **Isolation and/or quarantine of positive cases, or close contacts of cases are still mandated by MDPH (Massachusetts Department of Public Health), which is why we still conduct contact tracing. While most cases are reported via labs electronically, they still need to be reported.**
- Typically, doctor's offices do not need to report cases, as they are already reported for you via laboratory, but you can call your Local Board of Health if you'd like. Most testing is done at testing centers, which automatically report cases.
- Places like schools, daycares, day programs, residential programs, restaurants, and other employers have the potential for clusters or outbreaks within their business. COVID tends to spread VERY quickly through areas that employ several people, which is why we ask employers to report cases to their LBOH
- Employers are mandated to participate in the contact investigation of the LBOH.

What do I do if:

Scenario 1- Patient Tests positive for COVID **but is asymptomatic**- the patient is instructed by the LBOH to **isolate** away from others (even those in their own house) for 10 days **PAST THEIR POSITIVE TEST RESULT**. On day 10, they are evaluated by a LBOH contact tracer, and may come off of isolation and resume normal activity if they haven't developed any symptoms on day 11. Only Boards of Health can remove someone by isolation. Doctors do not have the authority to do so, therefore, doctor's notes are INVALID for removal of isolation.

Scenario 2- Patient tests positive for COVID **and has symptoms**- the patient is instructed by LBOH to **isolate** away from others (even in their own house) for 10 days **PAST THE FIRST ONSET OF THEIR SYMPTOMS**. On day 10, they are evaluated by a LBOH contact tracer, and if they have **improvement** in symptoms, **AND** have been **afebrile for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing meds**, they can come off of **isolation** and return normal activity on day 11. They must meet BOTH criteria in order to come off of isolation. If they do NOT meet these criteria, they are instructed to remain in isolation until day 14 post symptom onset, and in all cases, they are no longer considered infectious, and can be released from isolation on day 15. They can resume all normal activities.

Scenario 3- Patient is a close contact of a COVID positive person- the patient is instructed to **quarantine** away from others, including members of their household. They are instructed to remain in quarantine and **get tested on day 5 post exposure to the COVID positive patient**. We do this because we don't want false negatives. For example: if they are tested too early, say, on day 2, with the test coming back negative, going back to normal activity, and then develop symptoms and test positive on day 5. In that situation, they could have possibly exposed many more people. They should remain in **quarantine** throughout the entire time

until their test comes back. If it comes back negative by day 7 post exposure, and they are **asymptomatic** and **fever free for 24 hours**, they can be released after assessment by the LBOH from quarantine early on day 8. If the COVID test comes back positive, they switch over to **isolation** and **MUST** remain in isolation for the 10 days either past their symptom onset, or, if they don't have symptoms, 10 days past their positive test result. Those who test positive will need to have their own contact investigations done (by the LBOH) and if they are symptomatic, will need to be evaluated on day 10 post symptom onset. At that point, they must meet the criteria to return to normal activity as anyone who tests positive. Which means that they must show improvement in symptoms **AND** be fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medications.

Per the MDPH, people who are fully vaccinated are **not** considered contacts. Fully vaccinated people **do not** need to quarantine, but if they develop ANY symptoms of COVID after exposure, they should immediately quarantine and arrange for testing ASAP. If they test negative, they can resume normal activity. If positive, refer to scenarios 1 or 2. Please note that people who are fully vaccinated tend to have very subtle symptoms of COVID. They usually are so subtle that people may not notice that a small snuffle, or scratchy throat is considered a symptom.

As you probably already know, there are SEVERAL variables to this, but this is the guidance MDPH has given us to use when dealing with COVID positive cases or close contacts of COVID positive cases. You can be confident that if you follow these guidelines, you are doing the right thing. Please feel free to reach out to your LBOH with questions.

THE ONLY ENTITY THAT CAN RELEASE PEOPLE FROM ISOLATION AND QUARANTINE ARE EITHER THE STATE BOARD OF HEALTH OR THE LOCAL BOARD OF HEALTH WHERE THE POSITIVE OR QUARANTINING INDIVIDUALS RESIDE. DOCTORS CANNOT PROVIDE THESE NOTES. ALSO, THE BEST SOURCE OF INFORMATION FOR THESE REGULATIONS ARE ON THE WEBSITES OF THE CDC AND MDPH, AS WELL AS YOUR LBOH.

Pittsfield Health Department – conducts mandated contact tracing and education for COVID positive people who RESIDE in Pittsfield. Per MDPH regulations, the Board of Health that covers the town in which the patient resides must take the COVID cases that reside in their town. Pittsfield does not have jurisdiction to conduct communicable disease investigations outside of Pittsfield.

It is critical that we all do our part in helping prevent the spread of COVID in our community. We all want to get back to normal, but in order to do that, we need full cooperation from every member of the community. The Pittsfield Health Department is here as a resource to help. Please email or call with any questions.

Pittsfield Board of Health Nursing Contacts:

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Testing and Vaccine Resources

Berkshire Health Systems-505 East. St. Pittsfield, MA offers walk in vaccinations. They also offer COVID testing by appointment. They have the most accurate testing with quick results, in most cases. They also report quickly to the Boards of Health, which is crucial when it comes to contact tracing efforts. More information about this can be obtained by calling the BHS COVID testing hotline at 855-262-5465. Appointments for testing can also be made via this number as well.

You can also find more information about COVID vaccines at <https://getvaccinatedberkshires.org/>. While regular updates have been suspended, they have links to additional resources on their page.

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