

Covid-19 information and rules of conduct for household contacts

Infectious diseases doctors' information sheet

What does it mean to be a household contact of a person with Covid-19?

You have been given this information because someone you live with or have lived with has Covid-19 and you may therefore have been exposed to infection. This means there is a risk that you could become ill. To reduce the risk of infection spreading to others, you must follow certain rules of conduct (see below).

What is Covid-19?

Covid-19 is a viral infection that usually causes mild symptoms such as a runny nose, sore throat, cough and high temperature, but some people become more seriously ill with breathing problems and then need hospital care. Other symptoms that Covid-19 can cause are muscle aches, headaches, tiredness, an impaired sense of smell and/or taste, and stomach complaints leading to diarrhoea.

How is Covid-19 transmitted?

Covid-19 is transmitted through droplets and direct and indirect contact. When a person coughs, sneezes, speaks, sings or shouts, infectious droplets form and travel through the air. These droplets could then infect someone standing nearby. When the droplets land on surfaces or objects, you risk being contaminated through touch, usually via your hands. A person with Covid-19 can infect others even before they develop any symptoms. The time it takes between being infected and becoming sick (the incubation period) varies between 2 and 14 days, although it is most commonly 5 days.

What are the rules for household contacts?

Covid-19 is classed as a disease that is dangerous to public health and society under the terms of the Swedish Communicable Diseases Act. Since you are living with somebody with Covid-19, you are classed as a suspected case, meaning you might infect other people. Therefore, special rules apply and you must follow them for a set period to prevent you from infecting others.

These rules mean that:

- You must not go to your workplace, school, or preschool. However, you may work from home and participate in remote learning. If you are unable to work from home, you can apply for disease carrier's benefit from the Swedish Social Insurance Agency. In addition, you must not participate in activities where you will be in contact with other people, such as sports.
- You must follow special hygiene procedures: Maintain strict hand hygiene (wash your hands), cough and sneeze into your elbow or a handkerchief and not in the direction of other people.
- If you come into contact with any healthcare staff, you must tell them that you are a household contact of a person with Covid-19.

Parents and guardians must ensure that children in the household follow these rules. When contacting healthcare services, parents and guardians must inform any healthcare staff that their child is a household contact of someone with Covid-19.

What else must I do to protect others from infection?

The Swedish Communicable Diseases Act states that anyone who has or who might have an infectious disease must follow the measures in place to protect others from infection. This means that during the period that these rules apply for you, you must not meet with any other people than those you live with and you must not use public transport. You may spend time outdoors as long as you keep your distance from other people. However, you are allowed to make essential purchases from shops such as supermarkets or pharmacies. If you are in close contact with care staff, including homecare workers, you must tell them that you are a household contact of someone infected with Covid-19.

How long will I need to follow these rules?

You must follow these rules from the moment you are notified until 7 days have passed since your household contact with Covid-19 was tested. Once this period is over, you can return to work or school as long as you are still symptom-free. However, if you have taken a PCR test, you must wait for the results.

You must continue to stay alert to the symptoms of Covid-19, meet as few people as possible outside of your workplace and school, and refrain from participating in leisure activities for a further 7 days.

Who does not need to follow these rules?

People who have been infected with Covid-19 at some point within the past six months, or people who have been fully vaccinated for at least two weeks are exempt from these rules and may continue to go to work or school.

Do I need to get tested even if I have no symptoms?

As a household contact, you should get tested as per regional guidelines – even if you are symptom-free. If you have taken a PCR test, you must wait until you have received the results before returning to your workplace, school, or preschool.

If you work in elderly care or another healthcare organisation involving particularly vulnerable patients and are fully vaccinated or have had Covid-19 at some point within the last 6 months, you are exempt from the rules of conduct. However, you should still get tested according to local guidelines.

What must I do if I develop symptoms?

If you develop symptoms during this period, you must get tested and stay at home until you receive the results – even if this means you will then have to stay home longer than the 7-day period.

What should I do if I need medical care due to Covid-19 or any other illness?

You must NOT go directly to a healthcare centre/local emergency clinic/hospital. First, call the 1177 Care Guide to ask where you should go and inform them that you are a household contact of a person with Covid-19. If your condition becomes life-threatening, phone 112.

How do I appeal against my rules of conduct?

If you feel the rules of conduct you have been issued with are wrong, you can contact your regional infectious diseases doctor.