

Updated instructions for management of COVID-19 cases and their close contacts

1. Handling of positive cases:

Upon a positive result notice, following a rapid antigen test or a PCR (molecular) test, the virus-positive person must:

- self-isolate immediately,
- inform his/her Personal Doctor,
- inform his/her close contacts, employer, school, military camp, etc.,
- terminate his/her self-isolation only after the number of days provided for the discharge protocol have elapsed and after receiving an SMS for discharge.

It is forbidden to travel by any means of public transport (bus, taxi, plane and boat) for dispersion prevention reasons. Virus-positive individuals who have a scheduled trip are not allowed to travel before their official discharge by their Personal Doctor or the Discharge Team of the Ministry of Health. For citizens or tourists staying in hotels and for people who cannot self-isolate at their home, there is a provision for free state quarantine and transportation by means provided by the Ministry of Health. Persons who do not wish to be accommodated at the state quarantine places, may choose to rent at their own expense private accommodation (apartment, house, villa) and be transported by private vehicle to spend their self-isolation period there, following consultation with the Epidemiological Surveillance and Control Unit for Infectious Diseases (ES&CUID), but they cannot continue to stay in a hotel for any reason.

It should be noted that, the results from the rapid antigen testing units are communicated to the ES&CUID after the completion of the tests and within 24 hours virus-positive persons receive a written text (SMS) with the **instructions for the self-isolation of confirmed COVID-19 cases on the mobile phone they declared during their test**. The virus-positive person must follow the self-isolation instructions he/she receives. In case the virus-positive person is a minor, the guardian's mobile phone should be declared and not the child's.

In the same SMS, the virus-positive person receives an access password and a link to confirm his/her details, to declare his/her contacts and his/her Personal Doctor, so that he/she can monitor and discharge him/her and so that he/she has the ability to issue the necessary certificates of discharge when the quarantine is completed.

The social and family contacts of the positive case are declared immediately through the electronic platform, after having been declared by the virus-positive person and subsequently receive self-isolation instructions and their tests are scheduled by the Coordination Public Health Clinics.

In the instructions received by the virus-positive person, there is a relevant table, where the virus-positive person can declare additional close contacts, and after completing the electronic form he/she must send it by email to contacttracing@moh.gov.cy.

The Personal Doctor is **responsible for monitoring the health of his/her patients/beneficiaries, and for the discharge of confirmed cases**, according to the discharge protocol and **not earlier than 10 days from the diagnosis or the onset of symptoms**. Individuals who do not have a Personal Doctor are discharged by the Discharge Team of the Epidemiological Monitoring and Control of Communicable Diseases. Upon discharge, **all cases receive a text message indicating the discharge date which can be used for Safe Pass purposes**. In addition to their discharge (10 days after the positive result), coronavirus positive individuals can issue a European Digital Recovery Certificate for travel purposes within the European Union, via the portal <https://www.eudcc.gov.cy/>.

Sick leave is given by the Personal Doctor.

The data collected by the Epidemiological Monitoring and Control of Communicable Diseases, are solely used to identify the source of infection of the positive case, to locate their contacts and to understand the virus.

For general information, positive cases may call 1474 (Monday to Sunday 8:00-20:00). For reporting worsening symptoms, medical assessment and the need to be transported to a hospital they may call 1420, 24 hours a day.

If a person has been diagnosed positive to coronavirus and has not received a written message with the instructions within 24 hours, he/she should contact the laboratory or the individual who carried out the test and make sure that he/she has been declared as a positive case and that the contact details kept by the laboratory are correct (e.g. wrong phone number).

It is understood that if the positive results are not declared by the laboratory or the person who carried out the test at the Ministry of Health, it will not be possible for the virus-positive person to receive the required instructions, to monitor the course of his/her health, to declare his/her contacts, but also to receive the documentation he/she is entitled to upon discharge (e.g. SafePass, EU Digital Covid Certificate).

For discharge issues, confirmed cases can contact the Discharge Team at the email address covidfollowup@moh.gov.cy or at the telephone number 22605306.

Persons with a positive Covid test, who have completed their vaccination or have recovered before the period of 3 months, will follow the normal procedure and are not exempt from self-isolation.

Antibody tests and self-test results are not acceptable diagnostic methodologies of a positive case.

Handling of close contacts:

Close contacts are determined by specific criteria in accordance with the following:

- A person living together with a confirmed positive case,
- A person who had direct physical contact with a confirmed positive case (e.g. handshake),
- A person who had unavoidable contact with infectious secretions of a confirmed positive case (e.g. saliva),
- A person who had face to face contact with a confirmed positive case at a distance of less than 2 metres and a duration of more than 15 minutes,

- A person who was in an enclosed space (e.g. classroom, cinema, hospital waiting rooms, etc.) with a confirmed positive case for more than 15 minutes and at a distance less than 2 metres,
- A healthcare professional or other person who provided healthcare to a positive COVID-19 case, or laboratory personnel who handled a sample of a confirmed positive case without using appropriate protective equipment or if there was a breach in its integrity,
- A fellow traveler on an aircraft, persons travelling together or caring for a patient, crew members who served the part of the plane where the patient was seated (possibly all the passengers in the same part of the plane and even all passengers on the flight can be considered as close contacts, if there is more extensive exposure, due to the patient's serious symptoms and his/her movement on board the aircraft).

It is stressed that:

Close contact within educational units is determined by a relevant circular of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth and **the School's Management is responsible** to declare the close contacts.

Close contact within the workplace shall be declared by the **Health and Safety Officer** of the business.

For nursing staff, the instructions for returning to work may be different and under conditions set by the **Infections Committee** of the hospital.

What applies on a case-by-case basis regarding close contacts:

- **Booster dose of a vaccine, in effect as of the same day of the administration of the dose:**

The individual is not obliged to self-isolate, provided that personal protection measures are complied with (mask, hand hygiene, distancing from other persons, limiting social contacts, self-monitoring for symptoms). It is recommended to undergo a Rapid test on the 3rd and 5th day, *free of charge, through the tracing procedure.

- **Full vaccination with any vaccine recognized by the Republic of Cyprus (2 doses of a vaccine or 1 dose of a single vaccine + 14 days) and no more than 7 months have elapsed since the administration of the last dose:**

The individual is not obliged to self-isolate, provided that personal protection measures are complied with (mask, hand hygiene, distancing from other persons, limiting social contacts, self-monitoring for symptoms). It is mandatory to undergo a Rapid test on the 3rd and 5th day, *free of charge, through the tracing procedure. It is recommended to undergo a PCR test on 7th day after contact.

• Individuals who have previously gone through illness or been diagnosed as positive cases through a PCR or Rapid Test and no longer than 90 days since their release have elapsed:

• The individual is not obliged to self-isolate, provided that personal protection measures are complied with (mask, hand hygiene, distancing from other persons, limiting social contacts, self-monitoring for symptoms). It is mandatory to undergo a Rapid test on the 3rd and 5th day, *free of charge, through the tracing procedure. It is recommended to undergo a PCR test on 7th day after contact.

• Full vaccination with any vaccine recognized by the Republic of Cyprus (2 doses of a vaccine or 1 dose of a single-dose vaccine + 14 days) but 7 months have elapsed since the administration of the last dose:

The individual is obliged to self-isolate for 14 days from the day of contact with a confirmed positive case. Release earlier than 14 days can be done with a negative PCR test result on the 7th day after contact or later, and the cost is borne by the affected individual. It is mandatory to undergo a Rapid test on the 3rd and 5th day, *free of charge, through the tracing procedure.

• People with no history of vaccination or disease or who have not completed their vaccination scheme (i.e. one dose of a single-dose vaccine):

The individual is obliged to self-isolate for 14 days from the day of contact with a confirmed positive case. Release earlier than 14 days can be done with a negative PCR test result on the 7th day after contact or later, and the cost is borne by the affected individual. It is mandatory to undergo a Rapid test on the 3rd and 5th day, *free of charge, through the tracing procedure.

*The free Rapid test on the 3rd and 5th day after contact is scheduled by the Ministry of Health and the affected person is informed via an sms text message on the time and place of testing, which will be performed in locations to be announced. Close contacts must show the text message received, as proof that they are close contacts and provide the code attached, as well as proof of identity (id card, passport or ARC).

Close contacts must be declared as such by the positive cases either through the electronic platform or on the form they have received when they became positive, so that close contacts can receive a text message for a Rapid test appointment. It is noted that if the 3rd day from contact has elapsed, only the 5th day test will be scheduled, and if the 5th day has also elapsed, no tests will be scheduled and close contacts shall undergo a test, through a different procedure, the cost of which will be borne by them. In the case of children under 6 years of age, a free of charge PCR test will be scheduled via a telephone appointment through the Coordination of Public Health Clinics at their district of residence.

In order to verify the above, the Cyprus Police may request vaccination certificates or release certificates.

For nursing staff, instructions for return to work may differ, under conditions to be laid down by the Infections Committee of each hospital.

For all the above categories of close contacts, it is understood that once onset of symptoms consistent with COVID-19 is observed, they should contact their Personal Doctor for evaluation and in order to schedule a free PCR test through Public Health Clinics.

For close contacts classified as contacts of a variant of concern (e.g. The Omicron variant or other), guidelines may be modified. In this case persons will be contacted by telephone from a public officer for any changes in procedures.

Persons required to self-isolate may do so at their place of residence as defined below. In case the following guidelines cannot be applied, there is a quarantine

provision— at an additional cost borne by the affected person – in a specified quarantine hotel. This can be arranged by telephone at 22691345 (this cost is entirely borne by the Deputy Ministry of Tourism, if the close contact was a passenger on the same aircraft with a positive case and was contacted by telephone for instructions by an officer of the Ministry of Health). In any case, self-isolation in other than the hotels specified is **forbidden** due to risk of transmission. Private stay must be arranged, or transfer of the close contact to the specified hotel.

Guidelines for self-isolation at home

- Ideally, the person must be alone at home. If this is not feasible, the suspected case must isolate in a room, which under no circumstances will be used by other inhabitants of the residence. If there are other suspected or confirmed positive cases in the house, they should self-isolate separately.
- The room used by a suspected case must be adequately ventilated.
- Leaving the house is not permitted.

Self-isolation at home may be supervised either by on-the-spot checks or via telephone checks. Persons in home isolation are obliged to comply with the relevant decree. In case of non-compliance, they will be criminally liable.

- Visits are not permitted.
- The use of separate house appliances is recommended. If this is not possible, then disinfection must be carried out after each use with common detergent or soap, followed by rinsing and drying.
- The use of a separate bathroom and toilet is recommended. If this is not feasible, then disinfection must be carried out according to the guidelines of the health services (https://www.pio.gov.cy/coronavirus/pdf/4_3.pdf).
- Any planned trips prior to the discharge date are NOT allowed. Exemption can only be granted in the event that the permanent place of residence is abroad, always in coordination with the Epidemiological Monitoring Unit for briefing and instructions, under the condition that a negative PCR test with sampling taken less than 48 hours prior to departure is provided and that the person does not have any symptoms.

- Transfer is allowed ONLY in the case of a medical emergency and after consultation with the Personal Doctor or 1420. Transfer must be carried out without escort and only by private vehicle (not by bus or taxi), if possible.
- Until the end of the home self-isolation period, waste must be placed in a double disposal bag and kept for 72 hours in a place separate than the specified collection point. After 72 hours have passed, they can be placed at the regular collection point.
- If a suspected case is under the age of 15 or is a person requiring assistance who cannot care for himself/herself, then a parent/guardian/carer can self-isolate with the person in order to care for him/her and also request a special leave. For the person choosing to self-isolate with the suspected case, the same instructions of self-isolation apply for distancing in the home from other residents and the broader environment, as applies for the suspected case.
- The only exemption for lifting of self-isolation is for examination visits at Public Health Clinics.
- No close contact is permitted to stay at any hotel other than those specified by the Deputy Ministry of Tourism. Private accommodation will need to be arranged, or transfer to a specified hotel.

Follow up briefing/Sampling/Discharge

- The period of self-isolation is set at 14 days. The person defined as close contact can be released from quarantine earlier than 14 days, provided that he/she undergo a PCR test at a contracted laboratory on the 7th day or later from the contact with a confirmed positive case (contact day as day zero) and receives a negative result. The negative PCR test result must be sent to email: contacttracing3@moh.gov.cy.
- Quarantine begins the last day of contact with the positive case and not from the day of notification. The day of contact is set as day zero and the period of self-isolation begins to count from the following day.
- In case that close contacts are not isolated from the positive case (e.g. parents looking after minors, cares assisting persons who are unable to care for themselves, etc.), then the last day of contact (day zero) is the day of

discharge of the positive case, since, until the last day prior to discharge, a positive case is potentially contagious and the days of self-isolation are renewed.

- Provided that a person has been declared as close contact of a positive case, an officer of the Coordination of Public Health Clinics will contact the suspected case by telephone within a few days for briefing as to testing. Instructions will be given over the phone for the place and means of transfer. From the tracing procedure, each close contact is entitled to one free test.
- The test result will be sent by text message within 72 hours.
- If the person declared as a close contact is not contacted for testing, or does not wish to undergo the test, they can resume activities 14 days after the last contact with a positive case, provided they do not have any symptoms.
- Quarantine is automatically lifted after the self-isolation period has elapsed, with no further notification.

Personal Doctor

- The Personal Doctor does not need to be notified immediately, except in the event of symptoms onset. Then the doctor can schedule further testing if it is considered necessary.
- Daily self-monitoring of body temperature is recommended.
- In the event of non-registration to a Personal Doctor, immediate registration is recommended. If this is not possible, the person can call 1420 for reporting and assessing symptoms.

Special leave

- There is the possibility to obtain special leave from the Ministry of Health for people who have been assessed as close contacts of a positive case. The relevant file can also be completed electronically as follows:

1. On the website <https://www.pio.gov.cy/coronavirus/eng>, the tab Information Guidelines contains the *Application for the issuance of an absence from work Certificate for Public Health Reasons*.
2. The form must be filled and sent **after the quarantine period** by fax (22771496) or through email (cycomnet1@cytanet.com.cy), as written on the form. The certificate will be sent back in the same way.
3. The *Application for the issuance of an absence from work Certificate for Public Health Reasons* form, issued by the Ministry of Health, must be submitted to the Employer or to the Social Insurance Services.

For general information, call 1474 (08:00-20:00).

For any additional information to declare close contacts and clarifications on the tracing process, contact the Tracing Team on the following numbers: 22771923, 22514264, 22514258, 22514259, or by email to contacttracing2@moh.gov.cy (Monday-Sunday 08:00-00:00).

To report symptoms, call your Personal Doctor or 1420 (24 hours).

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