

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 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 contact surfaces. When someone sneezes or coughs, infectious droplets are formed in the air. This may infect someone standing nearby. Once the droplets have settled on surfaces or objects, the virus may then be passed on, usually via the hands. The amount of time between you contracting the disease and becoming sick (incubation period) varies between 2 and 14 days, although it is most commonly 5 days.

What rules of conduct apply for household contacts?

Covid-19 is dangerous to public health and dangerous to society and as such is subject to the Swedish Communicable Diseases Act. As a household contact of a person with confirmed Covid-19, you are regarded as potentially having the disease. This means that for a specified period of time, you must follow certain rules of conduct in order to prevent you from infecting others.

The rules of conduct mean that you:

- must not go to work, school or preschool. Working from home and remote learning is acceptable. If you are not able to work from home, you are entitled to a medical certificate so that you can apply for “virus carrier allowance” from the Swedish Social Insurance Agency. You must not participate in leisure activities where you have contact with others, for example, sports.
- must follow specific hygiene procedures: You must observe strict hand hygiene (wash your hands), cough and sneeze into the fold of your arm or a handkerchief and not in the direction of other people.
- must inform any healthcare staff with whom you may come in contact that you are a household contact of a person with Covid-19.

Parents/guardians are responsible for informing children in their household about the rules of conduct that have been imposed and ensuring they follow the rules. In conjunction with any form of contact with the healthcare services, it is the parent's/guardian's responsibility to inform healthcare staff that the child is a household contact of a person with Covid-19. According to the Swedish Communicable Diseases Act, those who are infected or could potentially be infected with a communicable disease have a duty to protect others from

infection. This means that during the period when you must follow rules of conduct, you must not meet people other than those in your household and you must not travel by public transport. You may spend time outdoors as long as you keep your distance from other people. You are allowed to make essential purchases from, for example, a supermarket or pharmacy. If you have close contact with care staff including home help workers, you must inform them that you are a household contact of a person with Covid-19.

How long do these rules of conduct apply?

You must follow the rules of conduct from the moment you were informed about them until 7 days have passed since the person in your household with Covid-19 was tested. Once those 7 days have passed, you can return to work or school if you are still symptom-free. However, if you have had a PCR test done, you must wait for the test results before doing so. We recommend therefore that for another 7 days, you continue to watch out for symptoms and continue to meet as few people as possible outside of work or school and refrain from leisure activities.

Which people are not affected by these rules of conduct?

A person who has had Covid-19 confirmed by laboratory testing during the last 6 months is not required to follow the rules of conduct above and can, for example, continue to go to work or school.

What should I do if I get symptoms?

If you experience symptoms during this period, you must get tested and stay at home until you get the result, even if the total time you need to be at home then exceeds 7 days.

Do I need to get tested if I feel healthy?

The guidelines for testing household contacts who are symptom-free may vary in different regions. If you have been tested, you must wait for the result before returning to your workplace, school or preschool. Keep in mind that you must continue to watch out for symptoms even if your PCR test result was negative and if you get any symptoms, you must get tested again.

What should I do if I require medical care because of 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.