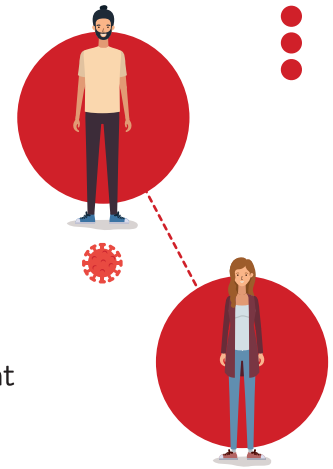
The Goals of Contract Tracing



- To interrupt ongoing transmission and reduce the spread of an infection
- To alert contacts to the possibility of infection and offer preventive services or prophylactic care
- To offer diagnosis, counseling and treatment to already infected individuals
- If the infection is treatable, to help prevent reinfection of the originally infected patient
- To learn about the epidemiology of a disease in a particular population

Contact tracing is a tried-and-true method that epidemiologists have been using for decades to tackle everything from foodborne illnesses to sexually transmitted diseases, as well as recent outbreaks of SARS and Ebola.

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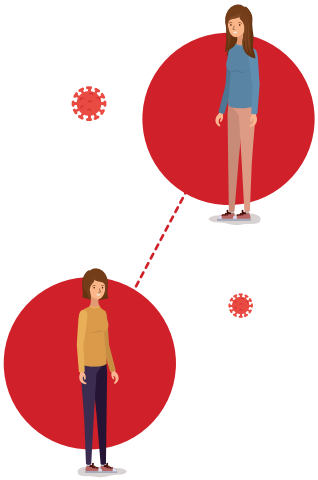


> **"It's a great tool for bringing an epidemic into the suppression or containment phase,"**
>
> **Syra Madad** of NYC Health + Hospitals, which leads New York City's Test & Trace Corps contact-tracing program

Large-scale contact-tracing programs have been instrumental in suppressing the novel COVID19 in South Korea and Germany.

Contact tracing is crucial to cutting off chains of infection before they balloon into outbreaks and along with social distancing and mask wearing, it's one of the only proven strategies in containing the coronavirus.

World Health Organization officials have repeatedly called on countries to scale up their contact-tracing infrastructure along with the ability to test broadly for the coronavirus.

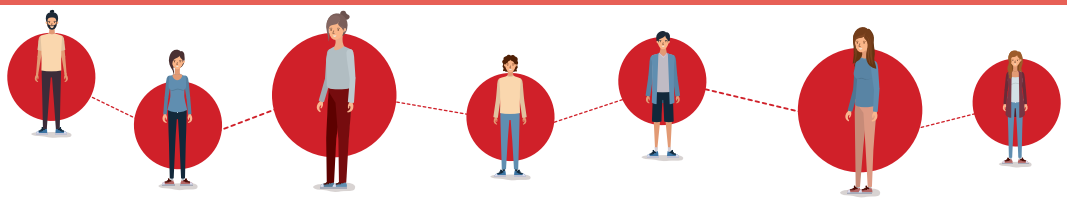
Contact Tracing – Role and Approach

Overview

Contact tracing is an effective disease control strategy that involves identifying cases and their contacts then working with them to interrupt disease transmission. This includes asking cases to isolate and contacts to quarantine at home voluntarily. Contact tracing is a key strategy to prevent the further spread of COVID-19.

Case investigation is the identification and investigation of patients with confirmed and probable diagnoses of COVID-19 (cases). Contact tracing, also referred to as contact investigation, is the identification, monitoring, and support of the individuals (contacts) who have been exposed to the patient and possibly infected themselves. This process prevents further transmission of disease by separating people who have (or may have) an infectious disease from people who do not.

Prompt identification, voluntary isolation or quarantine, and monitoring of a person diagnosed with COVID-19 and their contacts can effectively break the chain of disease transmission and prevent further spread of the virus. Case investigation and contact tracing are core disease control measures that have been used by state and local health departments for decades to slow or stop the spread of infectious diseases.



Core Principles of Contact Tracing during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Contact tracing should be conducted for close contacts of confirmed or probable COVID-19 patients.

Contact tracing steps include:

1. Case investigation: Public health staff work with a patient to help them recall everyone with whom they have had close contact during the time when they may have been infectious. For COVID-19, a close contact is defined as any individual who was within 6 feet of an infected person for a total of 15 minutes or more starting from 48 hours before the person began feeling sick until the time the patient is isolated.

2. Contact tracing: Public health staff begin contact tracing by notifying exposed individuals (contacts) of their potential exposure as rapidly and sensitively as possible, not revealing the infected patient's identity.

3. Contact support: Contacts are provided with education, information, and support to help them understand their risk, what they should do to separate themselves from others who are not exposed, and how to monitor themselves for illness. In addition, they are informed of the possibility that they could spread the infection to others even if they themselves do not feel ill.

4. Self-quarantine: Contacts are encouraged to stay home and maintain social distance from others (at least 6 feet) until 14 days after their last exposure to the infected patient, in case they also become ill.

Every effort should be made to interview the patient and contacts by telephone, text, or video conference instead of in person. Contact tracing is a labor-intensive process that requires a well-trained workforce of effective communicators who can approach individuals with compassion and build trust.