
Quarantine at home - coping tips

Summary

- Your doctor can tell you exactly when your quarantine can safely end.
 - Quarantine helps to slow the spread of infection across a population.
 - Have a home quarantine plan in place.
 - Keep up a normal daily routine as much as possible and maintain a positive attitude.
 - Treat quarantine as an opportunity to do some of those things you never usually have time for.
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Quarantining yourself at home means staying at home and avoiding contact with others if you have developed, or been exposed to, an infectious disease, until the infectious period of the illness is over, or until you know that you have not contracted an illness to which you have been exposed. Quarantine helps to slow the spread of infection across a population.

These coping tips are listed as a guide only. More disease-specific details will be provided by your doctor.

You may be asked to stay at home until at least seven days after the onset of symptoms or after you were first exposed to someone with the disease. Your doctor will tell you exactly when your quarantine can safely end.

Have a home quarantine plan in place

You will find it easier to cope with quarantine if you are prepared for its possibility. Practical suggestions for every Australian household include:

- Anticipate at least seven to 10 days in isolation at home.
- Try to have a two-week supply of non-perishable food items in the pantry. Stock long-life alternatives to perishable food items, such as powdered and UHT milk, tinned fruit and frozen vegetables.
- Have a supply of disposable tissues, antibacterial wipes and latex gloves.
- Check that your first aid kit includes a thermometer and paracetamol (to reduce fever).
- Make sure you have enough of any prescription and non-prescription medication you need to last a couple of weeks.
- Talk with friends and relatives who don't live with you about supporting each other if one household has to be quarantined. For example, agree to drop groceries or other supplies at the front door.

Family quarantine at home

If a family member has an infection and everyone in the household is quarantined, suggestions include:

- All family members should stay home. Do not allow any visitors.
 - Only one adult should look after the sick person. It is best if the carer is not pregnant because a pregnant woman is at increased risk of complications from many infections.
 - Try to keep the sick person away from other members of the household. For example, they should stay in their bedroom with the door closed, and they should not share a bedroom. If the sick person needs to share a common area with other people, they should try to stay one metre or more from other people to reduce the spread of illness, and wear a facemask.
 - Arrange for the sick person to have exclusive use of one bathroom (if your house has more than one bathroom).
 - Keep the sick person's items separate from everyone else's. For example, don't share towels or eating utensils, or store toothbrushes in the same holder.
 - Use disinfectant to clean items touched by the sick person, such as bedside tables and bathroom surfaces.
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- Keep an eye on the sick person for any signs that they are getting worse, for example, breathing problems, confusion or chest pain. In that case, seek medical attention.
- Use facemasks to reduce the risk of infection.
- Make sure the sick person gets plenty of rest, drinks plenty of water and maintains a healthy diet.

Using facemasks in quarantine

Facemasks are available from pharmacies and hardware stores. Be guided by your doctor, but general tips for their use include:

- Wear a P2 or N95 facemask when helping the sick person with a nebuliser or inhaler.
- Check that the mask has been well fitted and a good seal has been achieved. The mask should be sealed over the bridge of the nose and mouth, and there should be no gaps between the mask and face.
- Make sure the sick person wears a facemask when they are out of their bedroom.
- Throw away disposable facemasks after one use. (Reusable facemasks can be washed in hot water and tumble-dried.)
- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water immediately after taking off a facemask and before touching anything else.

Keeping spirits up in quarantine at home

Being under quarantine can be frightening, particularly for young children. Suggestions include:

- Find out everything you can about the infection from reliable sources.
- Talk to the other members of the family about the infection. Understanding the illness will reduce anxiety.
- Reassure young children using age-appropriate language.
- Keep up a normal daily routine as much as possible.
- Maintain a positive attitude.
- Think about how you've coped with difficult situations in the past and reassure yourself that you will cope with this situation too. Remember that quarantine won't last for long.
- Keep in touch with family members and friends via telephone, email or social media.
- Exercise regularly. Options could include exercise DVDs, dancing, floor exercises, yoga, walking around the backyard or using home exercise equipment, such as a stationary bicycle, if you have it. Exercise is a proven treatment for stress and depression.

Reducing boredom while in quarantine at home

Being confined to home for an extended period of time can cause boredom, stress and conflict. Suggestions include:

- Arrange with your boss to work from home, if possible.
- Ask your child's school to supply assignments, work sheets and homework by post or email.
- Take everyone's needs into account as much as possible when you plan activities. Remember, you don't have to spend every moment of quarantine together. Make sure everyone gets the opportunity to spend some time alone.
- Plan 'time out' from each other. You could split the family into teams that occupy different areas of the house – for example, Dad with one child in the garage and Mum with the other child in the lounge room – then swap the following day.
- Don't rely too heavily on the television and technology. Treat quarantine as an opportunity to do some of those things you never usually have time for, such as board games, craft, drawing and reading.
- Accept that conflict and arguments may occur. Try to resolve issues quickly. Distraction may work with young children.

Where to get help

- Your doctor – it may be best to ring first during an outbreak of an infectious disease
- NURSE-ON-CALL Tel. 1300 60 60 24 – for expert health information and advice (24 hours, 7 days)

Things to remember

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- Treat quarantine as an opportunity to do some of those things you never usually have time for.

This page has been produced in consultation with and approved by:

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