



4/7/20-- Uinta County COVID-19 Update

What is Quarantine? What is Self-Isolation? Who has to do it? When do I Get to Stop? Have I Been Exposed?

Now that there are positive cases in Evanston, and concerns about positive cases among trona mine employees, it seems that a few community reactions are common:

1. Many of us are on heightened alert and we're worried. Worry is definitely natural and understandable. We were feeling somewhat removed from scary statistics, but now it is here. The increased awareness, though, can be a good thing. Considering that everyone could be contagious with COVID-19, is a safe way to move (or not move, rather) in the world right now. Social distancing remains our best defense and best tool at slowing the spread.
2. In our smaller towns, we may hear about or know people who are being tested and are asked to isolate while awaiting results; or people who have been isolated due to a positive COVID-19 test result: or people who have been quarantined because of being in close contact with someone who tested positive. We might see them out and about and become concerned about what we assume to be non-compliance. I know that most of us are doing our best to do our part, and we become concerned about the possibility that not everyone is taking it seriously.
3. We might feel scared and worried because we had contact with someone who had contact with someone who had contact with a positive case. It might seem that because of those few degrees of separation that we have been exposed and need to quarantine ourselves. This is also very understandable—we don't want to endanger people around us, and we sure don't want to get sick ourselves.

Hopefully clearing up a few definitions and answering a few common questions can be of help to us all when it comes to all of these reactions and concerns.

What is a disease investigation? What is a close contact? When a disease investigation is conducted, public health staff interview any person who has received a positive test result to identify others who may have been in close contact with them. Close contacts have the highest risk of potential exposure, as opposed to non-close contacts. A close contact is defined as someone who has been within 6 feet of a person while contagious, for 10 minutes or more. Contacts further away than that or for shorter amounts of time have much less risk of exposure, and are not considered close.

Those who have been in close contact with a positive case while they were contagious are contacted by public health and asked questions about the time-frame of the potential exposure. These close contacts are then asked to quarantine at home for 14 days from the last time they had that sort of contact. The incubation period for Coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) is currently believed to be 2 weeks, so this gives us that window to ensure that illness doesn't develop

among those potentially exposed. In addition, in case of mild symptoms or asymptomatic transmission, it keeps them away from others while that may happen. Once the two weeks from last potential exposure is up, and with no development of symptoms, they are released from that quarantine.

What exactly is Quarantine? Quarantine means staying home and not leaving for anything except to seek medical care, if needed. It means trying to keep distance away from those at home as much as possible.

People who are contacts of contacts are considered to be extremely low risk of exposure, and are not required to quarantine. They can continue to work or leave their homes, if warranted. Again, we are asking everyone to really not go out as much as possible, whether you've been exposed, potentially exposed, related to someone who has been named a close contact, or just someone with no known exposure at all.

How about Isolation? Isolation is a similar term to quarantine, but not exactly the same. It means to not only stay home, but to stay isolated from others who are in the home as much as possible. That means staying in another room with no or little contact with others. It means using a different bathroom facility, if possible. People are generally asked to isolate while they are awaiting test results, and if their test result is positive for Coronavirus. Their isolation lasts until either a negative result is received or they have recovered from COVID-19.

Are people recovering? Are they contagious after they have recovered? The great news is that many people do recover. The cases we have seen here so far have been mild and recovery is speedy. Once a person is recovered they are not contagious and may be seen out in public again. They can go back to work, if they are part of the critical workforce. There is a specific criteria for recovery, as well. Public Health staff help individuals who have become infected with Coronavirus to understand their symptoms and when they can be considered recovered. Basically, if a week has passed since onset of symptoms, and if 72 hours have passed without a fever (with no medications on board that lower fever) and the cough is gone or markedly improved, a person is no longer contagious.

So, we may not know the quarantine or isolation status of folks, and we may not know whether or not they are recovered. It boils down to our need to be as good a citizen and neighbor to each other as we can, and to trust each other. Of course, along with that go the actions based on the assumption that everyone is a potential exposure to Coronavirus. That means not venturing out into public unless it is necessary, for sure staying home if sick at all, staying the 6 feet away, practicing good hand hygiene, and wearing a face covering if unable to maintain distance.

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