

# USET Tribal Epidemiology Center

## Recommendations for Tribal Consideration

### USET TEC COVID-19 Guidance 2022-02: Isolation and Quarantine Recommendations



## Background

In response to the rapid increase of COVID-19 cases due to the Omicron variant, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued [updated quarantine and isolation guidance](#) for individuals who have been exposed to or tested positive for COVID-19. A key change in this guidance was the reduction of the isolation period from 10 days to 5 days for any individual who tests positive for COVID-19, regardless of vaccination status. The rationale for this significant change was based on evidence that the Omicron variant may be transmissible for a shorter period of time than previous variants, as well as the likelihood that with the current trend in new cases, significant societal disruption would occur if all COVID-19 positive (including asymptomatic) persons were required to undergo a 10-day isolation.

The USET Tribal Epidemiology Center (TEC) supports the CDC's goal of providing appropriate pandemic response guidelines for all United States residents. However, we believe that these new recommendations may not provide an adequate level of COVID-19 prevention for our member Tribal Nations. The population we support is at a disproportionately high risk of severe illness and death from COVID-19, and have already experienced immeasurable loss and suffering due to the continued pandemic. At the same time, we understand that there are many factors within our member Tribal Nations that may make adhering to more strict prevention measures difficult. Therefore, the USET TEC offers the following recommendations for the continued use of a 10-day quarantine/isolation period, with detailed consideration of its risks/benefits in comparison to the CDC's shortened recommendation. Also, due to the high rate of breakthrough infections in vaccinated individuals due to the Omicron variant, we are not recommending separate quarantine guidance based on vaccination status.

## Definitions

- Quarantine refers to the time to avoid contact with others after exposure to someone who has COVID-19, when you have not tested or experienced any symptoms
- Isolation refers to the time you must avoid contact with others after you have tested positive for COVID-19, even if you are not experiencing symptoms
- Exposure is defined by the CDC as contact with someone infected with the virus that causes COVID-19. Close contact is defined as being less than 6 feet from an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period.

## Quarantine and Isolation Guidelines

As there is limited evidence on how vaccination status impacts transmission of the Omicron variant, the following guidelines should be applied to any individuals, regardless of vaccination status.

### Quarantine

- If you were exposed by close contact to someone with COVID-19, you should:
  - Stay home and stay away from others for 10 days after the date of last contact. Wear a well-fitting mask if being around other people is unavoidable.
  - Monitor yourself for symptoms of COVID-19. If you develop symptoms, get tested and follow isolation guidelines.
  - If you choose to get tested for COVID-19, wait for at least 5 days after the last contact with an infected person. If the test is positive, follow isolation guidelines. If the test is negative, please continue quarantine for the remainder of the 10-day period. The USET TEC is not recommending a 'test to release' strategy at this time.

The USET Tribal Epidemiology Center (TEC) is charged under the Indian Health Care Improvement Act with providing epidemiologic and public health support to federally recognized Tribal Nations in the Nashville Area. The USET TEC is a designated public health authority.



## Isolation

- If you test positive for COVID-19, or have symptoms of COVID-19, you should:
  - Stay home and stay away from others for 10 days (Day 0 is the day of first symptoms or the date of a positive test). Try to stay in a separate room from other household members and use a separate bathroom if possible.
  - Wear a well-fitting mask if being around others is unavoidable.
  - Seek medical attention if feeling short of breath or having other concerning symptoms.
  - Isolation may be ended after Day 10 if symptoms are improving, and you have been without fever for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication (such as Tylenol).

## Additional Considerations for Longer Quarantine/Isolation period

Implementing a longer quarantine/isolation period is not without certain risks. Tribal citizens who are in quarantine or isolation may need assistance with fulfilling basic needs, including, but not limited to, delivery of food or medicine, mental health support, and access to healthcare services. Many of these services were in place during previous periods of the pandemic, and may need to be re-implemented during the present wave.

- Assistance with access to basic needs
  - Grocery delivery/pick-up is a great option in some areas, but often not available in rural areas.
  - Medicine, including prescriptions and equipment, may need to be delivered.
- Mental health resources
  - While isolation is not inherently dangerous, prolonged or involuntary lack of social contact can have a negative impact on mental health.
  - It is extremely important to maintain contact with isolating individuals and perform check-ins with elders or anyone who has known prior mental health struggles.
- Transportation for testing or healthcare
  - If testing is required (such as for return to work), people may need assistance getting to a testing center, or getting an at home test delivered.
- For parents and guardians, caretakers of vulnerable individuals, or anyone who lives with higher risk individuals, exposure to COVID-19 poses an immediate threat to those they are responsible for, in addition to themselves
  - If possible, limit transmission by masking and distancing.
  - May require extra support, especially if the entire household becomes ill.

We recognize that these guidelines are more stringent or conservative than current CDC guidelines. Please contact USET TEC staff at [usetepi@usetinc.org](mailto:usetepi@usetinc.org) if you would like to discuss your Tribal Nation's situation.