

Isolation and Quarantine



Public health officials use isolation and quarantine to keep contagious diseases from spreading during outbreaks of contagious diseases, such as SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome), TB (tuberculosis), or other contagious diseases.

- **Isolation** is for people who *are* sick, and
- **Quarantine** is for people who *may soon get* sick because they had contact with someone who had the disease.

What is *isolation*?

Isolation means keeping sick people who have a contagious disease away from healthy people.

Many people choose to isolate themselves at home while they are sick to protect their family members and others. Keeping children home from school when they have chickenpox is an example of isolation. For patients with some diseases, like TB and SARS, hospitals will keep them isolated from other patients.

Do I *have to be* isolated?

Yes. If a health official orders you to stay away from others, you must obey.

What will happen to me if I am isolated?

You will get medical care while you are sick. You can be treated in:

- Your home,
- A hospital, or
- A healthcare facility.



Isolated patients *must* stay in the isolation area. Only caregivers are allowed to enter isolation areas.

What is *quarantine*?

Quarantine separates people who had contact with a sick person from other people who are not sick.

Quarantine is used to watch people who are not sick yet, but may soon get sick and spread the contagious disease to others.

**QUARANTINE
AREA**
AUTHORIZED
PERSONS ONLY

Do I *have to be* quarantined?

Yes. If health officials think you may have had contact with a contagious disease, they can order you to stay away from others.

What will happen to me if I am quarantined?

You may be asked to:

- Stay home,
- Stay away from other people,
- Check yourself for symptoms, and
- Call a doctor if you get symptoms.

Do isolation and quarantine really keep people from getting sick?

Yes. In the United States in 2003, isolation and quarantine were able to stop the spread of the contagious and deadly disease SARS. This helped keep people healthy even though there was no cure, vaccine or special medicine available.

For more information...

Call CDC for information in English or Spanish:

800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636)

888-232-6348 (TTY)

Or visit: www.bt.cdc.gov/ncidod
www.dhs.ca.gov/epo