

A short guide to quarantining after holiday travel

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If you traveled over the Thanksgiving holiday, it's time to go into quarantine.

Specifically, if you went out of state, California has issued a travel advisory recommending that you quarantine for 14 days. If you had prolonged exposure to anyone outside of your household or existing pandemic pod, it's a good idea to self-quarantine as well.

Dr. Robert Kim-Farley, a professor at the UCLA Fielding School of Public Health and former director of the division of communicable [disease control](#) and prevention at the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, said people should think of quarantine as the middle position between isolation (what you do when you know you are infected) and "normal" pandemic life (where you might venture outdoors while masked and maintaining social distance).

Sometimes, when you see or hear a word a lot, it starts to lose its meaning. Such is the case with "quarantine." Here's a very short FAQ about what you need to be doing to appropriately self-

quarantine.

Q. What does it mean to self-quarantine?

A. Stay at home, in your home, without going anywhere else or seeing anyone from outside your household, for 14 days.

The whole point of quarantining is to sequester yourself so that if you are infected, you do not infect anyone else. Take the phrase "stay at home" literally.

Q. What if I need something essential, like food or medicine?

A. If you absolutely need something, have it delivered. To avoid potentially infecting the delivery person, have them leave your package outside your closed front door, wait for them to leave, and wear a mask when you open your door to pick it up. Tip well.

Q. What if I really need to leave the house to do something else?

A. Kim-Farley said remaining on your property still technically counts, so you can take the dog out back for a bathroom break or take out the trash while you're wearing your mask. Other than that, the only valid reason to leave the premises is for a doctor's appointment, he said.

The goal here is to avoid any chance of being around other people. That means no visitors, even if they're just stopping by for a few minutes. No outside exercise beyond your property. No going places, even if you're just popping by the store for a couple of things or picking up takeout or running a super-quick errand.

Q. What if I have to go to work?

A. There is no such thing as "self-quarantining

except for work." If you are leaving the house and going to your workplace, you are potentially exposing co-workers and customers to the virus. You may be eligible for paid [sick leave](#) under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act.

Q. What if I take a test?

A. Testing does not exempt you from quarantining at any point in those 14 days. A negative test is not a hall pass to do whatever you want. You can test negative for the [coronavirus](#), still be incubating it, and then the next day be contagious. Testing negative a few days into quarantine may indicate that the viral load has not reached detectable levels yet. The only day you can take a test and know you're negative for sure is on Day 14.

Q. What if I start to feel sick?

A. If you start to exhibit symptoms of COVID-19, it's even more important that you avoid others as much as possible. Contact your doctor and let them know what's going on and ask if they should have a test ordered. If you test positive, contact anyone you saw when you were traveling and tell them. If your symptoms are mild, follow your doctor's advice. Depending on your [medical condition](#), you may not need to go to the hospital. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, seek immediate medical attention if you experience any of the following symptoms: trouble breathing, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion, inability to wake or stay awake, or bluish lips or face.

Q. This all seems really strict. I'm bored.

A. If you don't want to be restricted to your house for two weeks, don't travel out of state. Remember, we have to do this strange and different holiday season only once. Hope is on the horizon.

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