



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Public Health – Muskegon County

Isolation & Quarantine

Fact Sheet

Isolation and Quarantine

To contain the spread of a contagious illness, public health authorities rely on many strategies. Two of these strategies are isolation and quarantine.

- Both are common practices in public health, and both aim to control exposure to infected or potentially infected persons.
- Both may be undertaken voluntarily or compelled by public health authorities.
- The two strategies differ in that isolation applies to persons who are known to have an illness, and quarantine applies to those who have been exposed to an illness but who may or may not become ill.

Isolation: For People Who Are Ill

Isolation refers to the separation of persons who have a specific infectious illness from those who are healthy and the restriction of their movement to stop the spread of that illness.

- Isolation allows for the focused delivery of specialized health care to people who are ill, and it protects healthy people from getting sick.
- People in isolation may be cared for in their homes, in hospitals, or in designated healthcare facilities.
- Isolation is a standard procedure used in hospitals today for patients with tuberculosis (TB) and certain other infectious diseases.
- In most cases, isolation is voluntary; however, many levels of government (federal, state, and local) have basic authority to compel isolation of sick people to protect the public.

Quarantine: For People Who Have Been Exposed But Are Not Ill

Quarantine refers to the separation and restriction of movement of persons who, while not yet ill, have been exposed to an infectious agent and therefore may become infectious.

- Quarantine of exposed persons is a public health strategy, like isolation, that is intended to stop the spread of infectious disease.
- Quarantine is medically very effective in protecting the public from disease.

For more information on quarantine and isolation:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dq/isolation_quarantine/index.htm

CDC Public Information

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