

Coronavirus: Contact Investigations

What We Release and Why.



What is a Contact Investigation?

In the world of Public Health, a **Contact Investigation** is the process of identifying people who may have come into contact with a person carrying a contagious disease. The process includes tracing their movements through the local community, identifying people who may be at risk for contracting the illness, and testing those contacts for infection if needed.

Diseases for which contact tracing is commonly performed for include tuberculosis, vaccine-preventable infections like measles, sexually transmitted infections (including HIV), blood-borne infections, some serious bacterial infections, and novel infections (e.g. SARS-CoV2).

Why do you do Contact Investigations?

Contact Investigations are very important! The goals of the investigations are:

- To interrupt the spread of an infection
- To alert contacts to the possibility of infection
- To offer diagnosis, counseling and treatment to infected individuals
- To learn about the epidemiology of a disease in a particular population

Contact Investigations have been a pillar of communicable disease control in public health for decades, and the Amarillo Public Health Department has experts conducting them.

Who conducts Contact Investigations?

Public health professionals with extensive training in Contact Investigations conduct them. Their credentials range from epidemiologists and nurses to disease intervention specialists. Amarillo Public Health has an extensive network of trained professionals available, and is able to rapidly increase staffing to conduct numerous, simultaneous investigations if necessary.

What happens with the results?

Once the investigation is complete, individuals who spent time with an infected individual are given instructions regarding quarantine and what they should do if they become ill. Persons who are deemed medium or high risk are followed up with daily about symptoms.



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.
Amarillo



Why are the full results of the investigation not released?

The information is released for the direct result of stopping the spread of an infection. If the investigation shows potential for wide spread of the disease, then the information shared will be widespread. If the investigation shows a narrow circle of infection, then information released is targeted to the small circle of individuals at risk. In every case, the information released must respect patient confidentiality, as well as balancing the creation of a false sense of security or a false sense of panic in the community. These determinations are made by public health officials trained to weigh all these factors.

It's important to note that precautions shouldn't change if you learn that an infected person visited one grocery store versus another. The absolute best thing you can do is to limit your outings to what's unavoidable, cancel all gatherings, practice social distancing, and maintain enhanced hygiene practices including hand washing and not touching your face.

As is always the case, we will share information widely if we are unable to complete the full scope of the contact investigation at a specific location(s).

Do the results of the Contact Investigation change what I should be doing to protect myself from Coronavirus?

Unless you are contacted by Public Health, you should simply practice the same social distancing and enhanced hygiene recommendations provided by the CDC including:

- Stay home to reduce the risk of contracting COVID-19.
- Practice social distancing in public
- Wash your hands, frequently
- If you are experiencing symptoms, stay home unless you need medical care.
- If you need medical care, call your primary health physicians

Where can I go for more information?

- Amarillo Public Health: www.amarillopublichealth.org
- Texas Department of State Health Services: www.dshs.state.tx.us/coronavirus
- Center for Disease Control and Prevention: www.coronavirus.gov



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.
Amarillo

