

Isolation and Quarantine

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is the U.S. government agency responsible for identifying, tracking, and controlling the spread of disease. With the help of the CDC, state and local health departments have created emergency preparedness and response plans. In addition to early detection, rapid diagnosis, and treatment with antibiotics or antivirals, these plans use two main traditional strategies *quarantine and isolation* to contain the spread of illness. These are common health care practices to control the spread of contagious disease by limiting people's exposure to it.

Quarantine applies to those who have been exposed to a contagious disease, but who may or may not become ill.

Isolation applies to persons who are known to be ill with a contagious disease.

The list of diseases for which quarantine or isolation is authorized is specific in an *Executive Order of the President*. This list currently includes: cholera, diphtheria, infectious tuberculosis, plague, smallpox, yellow fever, viral hemorrhagic fevers (Lassa, Marburg, Ebola, Crimean-Congo, South American, and others not yet isolated or named), Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), and influenza that can cause a pandemic.

Quarantine



Quarantine refers to the separation and restriction of movement of persons who, while not yet ill, may have been exposed to an infectious agent and therefore may become infectious. Quarantine lasts only as long as necessary to protect the public by:

- (1) Providing public health care (such as immunization or drug treatment, as required).
- (2) Ensuring that quarantined persons do not infect others if they have been exposed to a contagious disease.

Quarantined individuals are sheltered, fed, and cared for at home, in a designated cohort facility, or in a specialized hospital, depending on the disease and the available resources. They are also among the first to receive all available medical interventions to prevent and control disease, including:

- Vaccination
- Antibiotics or antivirals
- Early and rapid diagnostic testing and symptom monitoring
- Early treatment if symptoms appear

The duration and scope of quarantine measures vary, depending on the purpose and what is known about the incubation period or how long it takes for symptoms to develop after exposure to the disease.

Isolation



Isolation refers to the separation of persons who have symptoms of a specific (or suspect) infectious illness from those who are healthy. Restriction of movement helps to stop the spread of illness. Isolation allows for the *focused delivery of specialized health care* to people who are ill. Isolation lasts for the *period of communicability* of the illness, which varies by disease and the availability of specific treatment. Usually it occurs at a treatment facility or in the person's home. Typically, the ill person will have his/her own

room and those who care for him/her may need to wear protective clothing and take other precautions, depending on the level of personal protection needed for the specific illness.

In most cases, isolation is voluntary; however, federal, state and local public health officials have the authority to require isolation of infectious sick people to protect the public and prevent further spread of disease.



For more sources of information on this topic visit:

ST. CLAIR COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT www.scchealth.co

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES www.michigan.gov/mdhhs

CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION www.cdc.gov