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MISSION:

In support of Allen County and its municipalities, the Fort Wayne-Allen County Department of Health strives to promote the health, safety, and well-being of all residents. With guidance from the Indiana State Department of Health and support from our many partnering agencies, we endeavor to have a model public health infrastructure that provides professional, responsive, and cost-effective services to the community.

March 9, 2020

The Covid-19 situation is an emerging, rapidly evolving situation and we would like to take this opportunity to provide a brief overview of some confusing but important public health terminology and some recommendations for situations in which you may eventually find yourself or others.

Isolation and quarantine are public health measures to help protect the public by preventing exposure to people who have or may have a contagious disease, such as COVID-19. These measures are particularly important when we are trying to minimize the spread of a virus that is new – again, like COVID-19. When a virus is new, science has not had the time to develop other important public health tools such as diagnostic testing, treatment and vaccines. Therefore, slowing the spreading of disease becomes an important intervention. Specifically:

- **Isolation** separates sick people with a contagious disease from people who are not sick.
- **Quarantine** separates and restricts the movement of people who were exposed to a contagious disease to see if they become sick.

So, if a person is diagnosed with COVID-19, they are put into isolation – either at home or in the hospital if they need additional care. If you have been in close contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19 and you are not sick, you would be asked to stay at home and that would be called quarantine.

Sometimes we ask people to “**self-monitor**” themselves for a fever (100.4° or greater) and other symptoms such as cough, shortness of breath, or sore throat. While self-monitoring, they can go about their routine activities like working or going to school, but they just need to watch for the development of any symptoms. This would be reserved for people who live with someone who has been placed in quarantine. If, however, the person in quarantine does go on to develop the disease, those who were self-monitoring due to exposure to the person in quarantine, would then go into quarantine themselves. For example, if I provided care to a patient who was later diagnosed with COVID-19 and had I currently no symptoms, I would be asked to quarantine myself. My husband would be asked to “self-monitor”. If I went on to develop COVID-19, my husband would then have to go into quarantine.

So, to be clear, household contacts and family members of people who are currently quarantined can go about their normal business, they just need to self-monitor for fever or other symptoms. Should they develop any symptoms, then of course, they need to call their doctor.

Our goal during the COVID-19 situation is to slow the spread of this virus in our community while at the same time minimizing the negative impact on your ability to engage in routine activities. **The above are the current recommendations, but as always with an evolving situation, they are subject to change at any time as new information becomes known.**

We hope this helps you understand the terminology and recommendations that you may hear in the news or from your employer or healthcare provider. Please visit our website for more information: <https://www.allencountyhealth.com/get-informed/covid-19/>

Thank you again for your cooperation and your commitment to our community.

Sincerely,

Deborah A. McMahan, MD
Health Commissioner