



# WELLCOME MD



As we mentioned in last week's update, WellcomeMD has expanded its in-office appointments.

Soon, our communities will follow suit and begin to move into "Phase 1" of reopening. As stay-at-home measures begin to be gradually relaxed, containment strategies such as contact tracing will become vital to allow more businesses and services to reopen.

What is contact tracing? Why is it important?

## **How brief, casual contact with others can transmit COVID-19**

In order to get infected, you need to get exposed to an infectious dose of the virus. Based on infectious dose studies with MERS and SARS, some estimate that as few as 1,000 SARS-CoV2 viral particles are needed for infection to hold. Please note,

this still needs to be determined experimentally, but we can use that number to demonstrate how infection can occur.

**Remember the formula:** [Infection = Exposure to virus x Time]

“If a person coughs or sneezes, approximately 200 million viral particles go everywhere,” Dr. Neal Carl said. “Some of the virus lingers in the air, some falls on surfaces and most falls to the ground. So, if you are face-to-face with a person that sneezes or coughs straight at you, it’s easy to see how it is possible to inhale 1,000 virus particles and become infected.”

An infected person would likely exhale 20 copies of the virus per minute in the environment with general breathing. Even if every copy of the virus ended up in your lungs, you would need to be around them for 50 minutes to inhale 1,000 copies of the virus.

Speaking increases the release of respiratory droplets to about 200 copies of virus per minute. Again, assuming every virus is inhaled, it would take about 5 minutes of speaking face-to-face to receive the required dose.

The “Exposure to virus x Time” formula **is the basis of contact tracing**. Anyone you spend greater than 10 minutes with in a face-to-face situation is potentially infected. Anyone who shares a space with you (e.g. office space) for an extended period of time is potentially infected.

## **What is contact tracing?**

Contact tracing will become exponentially important as our communities begin to reopen and effective contact tracing will help allow our communities to move through the phases of reopening quicker.

Contact tracing is an initiative put in place to be [proactive in preventing the spread of COVID-19](#). Patients who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 are contacted by specially trained contact tracing professionals in order to find out with whom the patient has been in close contact within a certain time frame.

Immediately after the patient has given that information to the contact tracer, the potentially exposed people (the contacts) are then contacted by the contact tracer to ensure they quarantine and/or practice social distancing for 14 days.

## **How is contact tracing accomplished?**

CDC states, "Contact tracing is a specialized skill. To be done effectively, it requires people with the training, supervision, and access to social and medical support for patients and contacts." Both North Carolina and Virginia's health departments are currently hiring additional contact tracers to help during their phases of reopening.

Contact tracing is imperative to stop the chains of transmission, especially in workplaces and living facilities. The best way we can assist with contact tracing is by keeping track of where we've been and for how long and freely sharing that information if we are contacted by a contact tracer.

The safest, most effective way to stop the spread of COVID-19 is by staying home. But contact tracing will be equally important as our communities begin to reopen.

"Going forward, we will need to be willing to keep track of where we've been and who we have had contact with," Dr. Carl said. "We'll then need to be willing to share that information if we are contacted by a contact tracer."

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