Tracing: What to Expect

What is tracing?

Tracing, also called contact tracing, involves finding people who tested positive or were exposed to COVID-19 and asking them to safely separate from other people until they can no longer spread the virus.

What is the role of a Contact Tracer?

Contact Tracers call people who test positive or have been exposed to COVID-19. A Contact Tracer will:

+ Ask how you are feeling.
+ Ask if you need services and support to help you stay healthy and avoid spreading COVID-19.
+ Explain how long you need to stay inside and away from other people.
+ Ask questions to figure out how you may have been infected, if you have tested positive.
+ Ask for names and contact information of everyone you had close contact with while you could have spread the virus to others, if you have tested positive.

A Contact Tracer may also visit you in person to check on you. They will show you their identification card to prove they are a Contact Tracer.

How can New Yorkers know if the person calling is a Contact Tracer with the Test & Trace Corps?

The NYC Test & Trace Corps Contact Tracers are working to call everyone who tested positive for or were exposed to the virus that causes COVID-19. Please answer the phone if you get a call from:

+ NYC Test+Trace
+ NYC Covid Test
+ A phone number beginning with 212-540-XXXX or 212-242-XXXX

You also can ask the person calling you to provide a code to enter into the "Validate My Tracer" tool. The tool will confirm the contact tracer's name if the code is valid. Once a valid code has been used, it expires and cannot be re-used. To use the "Validate My Tracer" tool:

+ 1) Request a code from the person calling or visiting you.
+ 2) Visit testandtrace.nyc.
+ 3) Select "Click Here to Validate My Tracer".
+ 4) Enter the code.

A Contact Tracer will NEVER:

+ Ask for your name - they will know it when they call you
+ Ask for your Social Security number
+ Ask for any private financial information
+ Ask for credit card information
+ Ask to take control of or download software to your phone, tablet, or computer

A Contact Tracer may also visit you at home, especially if they cannot reach you by phone. They will show you their identification card to prove they are a Contact Tracer.

What is "close contact" with someone who tested positive for COVID-19?

Close contact is defined as:

+ Living with someone who tested positive for COVID-19
+ Kissing or having sex with someone who tested positive for COVID-19
+ Providing care in the home of someone who tested positive for COVID-19
+ Spending 10 minutes or more within six feet of someone who tested positive for COVID-19

How does the Test & Trace Corps get people's information?

If you were diagnosed with COVID-19, the Test & Trace Corps received your information from the NYC Health Department. New York State law and the New York City Health Code require laboratories to send positive test results to the NYC Health Department. The NYC Health Department securely shared your information with the Test & Trace Corps in compliance with privacy laws that allow this type of information to be used to protect public health and stop the spread of disease.

If you were exposed to COVID-19, the Test & Trace Corps received your information because someone with COVID-19 told a Contact Tracer that you were in close contact with them, or you were in a location where someone with COVID-19 may have exposed you. A Contact Tracer cannot tell you who told them you were a close contact.

Can my smartphone tell me if I was in close contact with someone who has COVID-19?

If you download and activate the COVID Alert NY app, you will get an alert if you were in close contact with someone who tests positive for COVID-19. The app will never collect, transmit or store your personal information and is completely anonymous. Your location will never be tracked; the app uses bluetooth technology to sense when another person with the same app comes within 6 feet. For more information, visit coronavirus.health.ny.gov/covid-alert-ny/.

I have COVID-19. How do I tell my close contacts that they were exposed?

Contact tracers will notify your close contacts that they were exposed to COVID-19 – but only if you share their name and contact information with your contact tracer. Your contact tracer will never tell your close contacts that you are the person who named them.

We recommend that you tell your close contacts that they were exposed to COVID-19 before a contact tracer reaches out to them, if you feel comfortable. You could say something like: "I was just diagnosed with COVID-19. Because we were in close contact while I could have spread the virus, you have been exposed. You should stay home and away from other people for 10 days

since the last time we were together. If you cannot do that, call the NYC Test & Trace Corps Hotline at 212-COVID19 for information on free resources to help you safely separate, such as free food or a free hotel room. You can also call the hotline or visit nyc.gov/covidtest to find a testing location near you."

How will the NYC Test & Trace Corps ensure the privacy and security of personal information?

The NYC Test & Trace Corps is committed to protecting the privacy and security of New Yorkers' personal health information as required by federal, state and local law and in keeping with the NYC Health + Hospitals' and the City Health Department's long-time experience in guarding such information. The information that the NYC Test & Trace Corps receives through contact tracing is confidential and protected under the New York City Health Code.

The NYC Test & Trace Corps will not ask about anyone's immigration status. The Corps database will not be linked to any law enforcement databases. Any information the NYC Test & Trace Corps obtains will be stored securely and used by authorized staff for the limited purpose of protecting public health.

Will anyone be considered a "public charge" under immigration law for receiving services from the Test & Trace Corps?

No. Getting tested, speaking with a Contact Tracer, or using a Take Care hotel to safely separate will not affect your ability to apply for a green card. Additionally, medical treatment or preventive healthcare services related to COVID-19 will NOT be considered under the public charge rule.

How is the NYC Test & Trace Corps working to understand the diverse needs of New Yorkers, particularly communities most impacted by the virus?

The Test & Trace Corps is working to ensure that this effort is reflective of the diverse city it serves. Community groups provide advice and support to help us deliver effective, culturally appropriate services, and to address the needs of communities that have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, Contact Tracers are from NYC neighborhoods hardest hit by COVID-19.

In addition, through partnerships with over a dozen community-based organizations across the city, the NYC Test & Trace Corps is providing Resource Navigators to help New Yorkers overcome logistical issues they may encounter while safely separating in their homes such as access to food or medicine.

To learn more about NYC Test & Trace, visit testandtrace.nyc.