

## Directorate-General for Health publishes norm on contact tracking - Introduction

The Directorate-General for Health (DGS) has published a Standard on the tracking of contacts (identification, risk assessment and implementation of measures), which is one of the key elements for the early detection of cases and limiting the spread of COVID-19.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) and ECDC, *contact tracing* is essential to stop the transmission of COVID-19.



Contact screening consists of identifying all persons (contacts) who have been exposed to respiratory droplets or secretions from a case of COVID-19; in the evaluation of contacts with regard, among others, to the stratification of exposure risk, and in the implementation of measures, including prophylactic isolation and surveillance (follow-up and regular monitoring of contacts in relation to their symptoms).

The standard establishes the criteria for defining contact, which include, for example, exposure to a case of COVID-19, or to biological material from a confirmed case, within the time period of transmission (from 48 hours before the start of the case symptoms).

After the identification of a case of COVID-19, detailed epidemiological investigation by the Health Authority, supported by the Public Health Unit, must be ensured. Based on the risk assessment, the set of measures considered appropriate should be applied. This should be done as early as possible after the case is identified.

When the contact has had a high risk exposure, he / she should be under active surveillance for 14 days (subject to daily contacts), since the date of the last exposure, and in prophylactic isolation. Among the measures to be adopted, close contact must self-monitor symptoms compatible with COVID-19 daily, measure and record body temperature twice a day, and be contactable.

The contact classified as having low risk exposure, is subject to passive surveillance for 14 days and must also self-monitor symptoms daily and measure and record body temperature twice a day. In these cases, the contact must not frequent places with crowds of people, being able to maintain work activity, with appropriate use of a mask.

The standard also indicates the procedures to be adopted in the case of a suspected case detected during the identification or surveillance of contacts. In these situations, the suspected case will be referred and must perform a laboratory test for SARS-CoV-2.

The now published document presents the definition of contact, high and low risk exposure and the approach flow according to the classification.

Informal translation by Safe Communities Portugal

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