



Public Health Quarantine

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What is quarantine?

Quarantine is something public health officials may do to keep the public safe from infections that are spreading from person-to-person.

Quarantine means keeping people who have had contact with a germ but who are not sick away from other people. This is done to make sure that if the person gets sick, he/she won't spread the sickness to other people.

The word quarantine comes from the Italian for forty days. In the 1300s, there was an epidemic of the disease plague. Ships had to stay outside the port of Venice, Italy for forty days if they came from a city where people had plague. This was done to try to stop the plague germ from entering the city.

When is quarantine used?

People might be quarantined when there is a serious illness that can be spread from one person to another. This is especially true if:

- there is no vaccine or medicine that can be used to keep people from getting sick or there is not enough for everyone;
- a person who is sick can spread the disease before he or she feels sick.

Quarantine is one of the tools public health officials might use to stop the spread of pandemic influenza. Pandemic influenza is a worldwide outbreak of influenza that is caused by a new virus that spreads very easily and can make many people seriously ill.

How long should someone be in quarantine?

Quarantine lasts only until we are sure that people who were quarantined are not infected. The length of time is different and depends on the disease.

A person may be kept in quarantine until he or she can receive a vaccine or medicine that will keep the germs from spreading to others. If there is no vaccine or medicine available, the person may be kept in quarantine until he or she becomes sick or it is clear that he or she is not going to get sick.

Can people be quarantined if they don't want to be?

A person might be asked to quarantine himself or herself. If necessary, public health officials may force someone to be quarantined. By law, the US government must prevent certain diseases from coming into the US from foreign countries and from spreading from one state

to another. These diseases are cholera, diphtheria, infectious tuberculosis, plague, smallpox, yellow fever viral hemorrhagic fevers, SARS and pandemic influenza.

Each state has its own laws that tell how quarantine can be used. In Connecticut, the local health director can require someone to be quarantined if he or she can show that:

- The person has come into contact with a disease that is easily spread from one person to another or is contaminated and;
- The person is a substantial threat to the public health and;
- The public cannot be protected without separating the person from others.

If the Governor declares a public health emergency, the Connecticut Commissioner of Public Health is also allowed to quarantine someone.

What do people in quarantine need?

Quarantine is done to protect the public. However, it can be hard for people who are quarantined. If possible, people should be quarantined at home. According to Connecticut law, people in quarantine must have food, clothing, shelter, medication and quality medical care. They should be able to communicate with people who are not quarantined.

For more information:

- American Red Cross & CDC. Controlling the Spread of Contagious Disease. http://www.redcross.org/preparedness/cdc_english/IsoQuar.asp#how
- CDC. History of Quarantine. <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dq/history.htm>.
- CDC. Fact Sheet. Isolation and Quarantine. <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dq/isolationquarantine.htm>
- State of Connecticut Statutes Sections 19a-221 and 19a-131b. <http://www.cga.ct.gov/asp/menu/Statutes.asp>
- CDC. Questions and Answers on the Executive Order Adding Potentially Pandemic Influenza Viruses to the List of Quarantinable Disease. http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dq/qa_influenza_amendment_to_eo_13295.htm



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