



# Arkansas Department of Health

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Governor Asa Hutchinson  
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On December 4, 2020, the Arkansas Department of Health (ADH) issued an update to healthcare providers on Arkansas's recent adoption of new guidelines concerning the length of quarantine period for people who have been exposed to a person known to have COVID-19, i.e., close contacts. These changes were adopted on December 3, 2020 after the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced new recommendations on December 2, 2020. They are now in effect.

These changes have created some confusion regarding the use of COVID-19 antigen tests for the purpose of releasing close contacts after day 7 of quarantine, and an apparent inconsistency with previously issued guidance which limits the use of COVID-19 antigen tests to symptomatic patients only. This guidance is being provided for clarification.

The ADH recommends the use of COVID-19 antigen tests in two specific and distinct populations:

1. **Persons in the general population with COVID-19 symptoms**. For this population, COVID-19 antigen tests are to be used only when symptoms are present. A negative antigen test result in this situation needs to be confirmed by a 'send-off' PCR test.
2. **Persons who are known close contacts of a confirmed or probable COVID-19 case, who have had no symptoms** during their quarantine period leading up to the time of antigen testing, and who are being considered for early release from quarantine after day 7 of quarantine. For this population, a PCR test is preferred; however, an antigen test is acceptable in the absence of symptoms and does not need to be confirmed by a 'send-off' PCR test. The test cannot be performed earlier than day 5 after exposure to a case.

For more details about options and necessary conditions for releasing close contacts before the full 14-day quarantine period, refer to the December 4 guidance of the Arkansas Department of Health found [here](#).