

COVID-19: Checklist for Discharging Patients with COVID-19

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has clarified that patients with COVID-19 can be discharged from a health care facility to both home and long-term care facilities when clinically indicated. The decision to discharge patients should be made in collaboration with the patient's clinical care team and the state health department.

Use this document to guide health care regarding the decision to discontinue transmission-based precautions and discharging hospitalized patients with COVID-19. The checklist can guide the considerations for both actions. This document aligns with CDC federal guidelines (updated March 23, 2020).

1 | Assure that the patient is clinically stable to be discharged with the care team. Meeting criteria for discontinuation of transmission-based precautions is not a prerequisite for discharge.

2 | Determine if transmission-based precautions are needed by use of a test-based strategy. This strategy is recommended because the patient being evaluated is hospitalized. It is also recommended to follow this strategy when the patient is immunocompromised or being transferred to a long-term care or assisted-living facility.

Test-based strategy to remove transmission-based precautions:

- Resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications, **and**
- Improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath), **and**
- Negative results of an FDA Emergency Use-Authorized COVID-19 molecular assay for detection of SARS-CoV-2 RNA from at least two consecutive nasopharyngeal swab specimens collected ≥ 24 hours apart (total of two negative specimens).¹ See [Interim Guidelines for Collecting, Handling, and Testing Clinical Specimens for 2019 Novel Coronavirus \(2019-nCoV\)](#).

3 | If testing is not readily available, facilities should use the nontest-based strategy to determine discontinuation of transmission-based precautions or extend the period of isolation beyond the nontest-based strategy on a case-by-case basis in consultation with local and state public health authorities.

Nontest-based strategy:

- At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since recovery, defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath), **and**
- At least 7 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.

4 | When discharging the patient to home and the patient requires transmission-based precautions, take into consideration the following recommendations:

- Assess if the patient will be able to maintain home-isolation recommendations (Does the patient have the ability to understand isolation recommendations? Does the patient have a psychiatric disorder or medical condition that may prevent them from maintaining isolation recommendations?).
- Assess if the patient's home is suitable to adhere to isolation recommendations (Does the patient reside in a communal environment, such as a single-room occupancy, which shares bathroom or kitchen facilities?).

5 | When discharging to a long-term care facility and the patient requires transmission-based precautions, adhere to the following recommendations:

- Prior to transfer, review precautions with the accepting facility to ensure that the facility has the proper personal protective equipment and ability to adhere to precautions.
- Preference should be given to facilities that already have cared for COVID-19 cases or have a unit designated for COVID-19 patients.

6 | When discharging to a long-term care facility and the patient no longer requires transmission-based precautions:

- Symptomatic patients should be placed in single rooms and be restricted to their rooms.
- Asymptomatic patients require no further restrictions.

¹ “Criteria for Return to Work for Healthcare Personnel with Confirmed or Suspected COVID-19 (Interim Guidance),” Center for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/healthcare-facilities/hcp-return-work.html#f1>

Resources

CDC COVID-19 Discontinuation of Transmission-Based Precautions and Disposition of Patients with COVID-19 in Healthcare Settings (Interim Guidance): <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/disposition-hospitalized-patients.html>

CDC COVID-19 Interim Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Patients with Suspected or Confirmed Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in Healthcare Settings: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/infection-control/control-recommendations.html>

CDC COVID-19 Interim Guidance for Implementing Home Care of People Not Requiring Hospitalization for Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19): <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-home-care.html>

Discontinuation of Home Isolation for Persons with COVID-19 (Interim Guidance): <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/disposition-in-home-patients.html>