

# COVID-19

## Reporting of Probable Cases FAQ

### What is a probable case of COVID-19?

Probable cases of COVID-19 disease are individuals who **have symptoms of COVID-19**, but have not been tested, **and** meet one of the following conditions within the past 14 days:

1. They have been in close contact with a laboratory confirmed case or close contact with another probable case of COVID-19,
2. They have been in close contact with a symptomatic contact of a laboratory confirmed case,
3. Have traveled to an area experiencing sustained, ongoing community transmission of SARS-CoV-2 (the novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19 disease), or
4. Are people within the community who public health authorities consider more likely to be exposed, such as health care workers or people living in group homes.

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 include a fever, cough and shortness of breath/difficulty in breathing.

### The number of people in my community who have COVID-19, or probably have it, is suddenly a lot bigger. Why?

We know that seeing how many additional people are likely to have COVID-19 can be startling, but we knew that the number of confirmed cases was only telling us part of the story. Michigan's number of confirmed cases is understood to be an undercount, something the new data will help to improve.

Also, as more testing becomes available, it is expected that we will see other increases in the number of people that are infected.

This additional data will allow us to better understand COVID-19. We can think of this disease as an iceberg. The laboratory-confirmed positive cases collected are the tip of the iceberg. It is what we can see first and understand most clearly. We know that the biggest part of the iceberg is lurking below the surface of the water, and we can't see it. In this case, it is our probable and asymptomatic cases across the state that we haven't been able to measure. Going beyond the "tip of the iceberg" and reporting probable cases will give us the opportunity to learn more about this virus and plan appropriate public health actions.

### How do state and local health departments find out who is a probable case of COVID-19?

As local health department staff conduct COVID-19 disease investigations, each positive case can yield dozens of contacts who may have been infected. These contacts are interviewed to determine if they have developed symptoms and may be a probable case. Most contacts of confirmed and probable cases will be asked to quarantine at home and report whether they have developed symptoms of COVID-19. Critical infrastructure personnel, such as healthcare workers or first responders, who do not have symptoms but are close contacts to confirmed or probable cases, may undergo enhanced self or employer monitoring.

Livingston County Health Department

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### **Will probable cases be tested to see if they are positive?**

Although testing is being expanded, we continue to have limited capacity; therefore health care providers have to prioritize who gets tested based on MDHHS guidance. However, if resources allow, individuals with mild symptoms may be tested. It is essential to note that whether or not a person is tested, if their healthcare provider or health department tells them that they are a probable case of COVID-19, it is still important to follow the recommendations of home isolation and quarantine for their close contacts. As testing has been limited for many in Michigan, knowing more about the number of probable cases can help communities get a clearer understanding of the spread of the disease.

### **Should we continue efforts to Stay Home, Stay Safe?**

It's critically important. People should continue to follow social distancing guidelines, wear a cloth face covering when in public, and only leave their home for essential reasons. This will allow us to continue to minimize the number of people who get sick.

### **What if a person, who is a probable case, receives a laboratory-confirmed positive test?**

If an individual who is reported as a probable case later receives a laboratory test confirming COVID-19 disease, they will then be counted as a confirmed case and removed from the count of probable cases.

*This fact sheet is for informational purposes only and is not intended for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information contact your health care provider or visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).*

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