



Knox County Health Department

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MEDIA ADVISORY FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 8, 2021

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KCHD prioritizing vaccination efforts, changing contact tracing strategy

Knoxville, Tenn. – To prioritize vaccination efforts, the Knox County Health Department is changing its contact tracing and case investigation strategy. An important tool in a typical outbreak, contact tracing is less effective than vaccination when such a high level of community transmission is occurring.

Contact tracers are, in effect, disease detectives. They interview people who have recently tested positive for an illness, work to determine with whom they've recently come in contact and provide advice to those people on how to avoid spreading the virus to others.

Because transmission levels remain high and vaccination efforts are ramping up, the Health Department will scale back who will be contacted following testing positive with COVID-19. KCHD will only interview people diagnosed with COVID-19 within six days of the health department being notified. Additionally, notifying close contacts will be the responsibility of the individual who tested positive.

During interviews, public health team members will provide information and resources that can be shared with a case's close contacts.

"We are asking people who know they have the virus to do their part in telling their circle of friends and family," said Senior Director and Public Health Officer Dr. Martha Buchanan. "This adjustment will allow us to utilize staff where they will have the most impact."

If a person is exposed to COVID-19, they should begin quarantining immediately. Additionally, individuals should isolate immediately after receiving a positive test result and begin calling any close contacts to advise them of their need to quarantine. Regardless of symptoms, those who have been tested should quarantine until the results are received.

For additional information regarding isolation/quarantine guidelines, information for those who were exposed to COVID-19 and the quarantine/isolation calculator, visit KCHD's [website](#).

