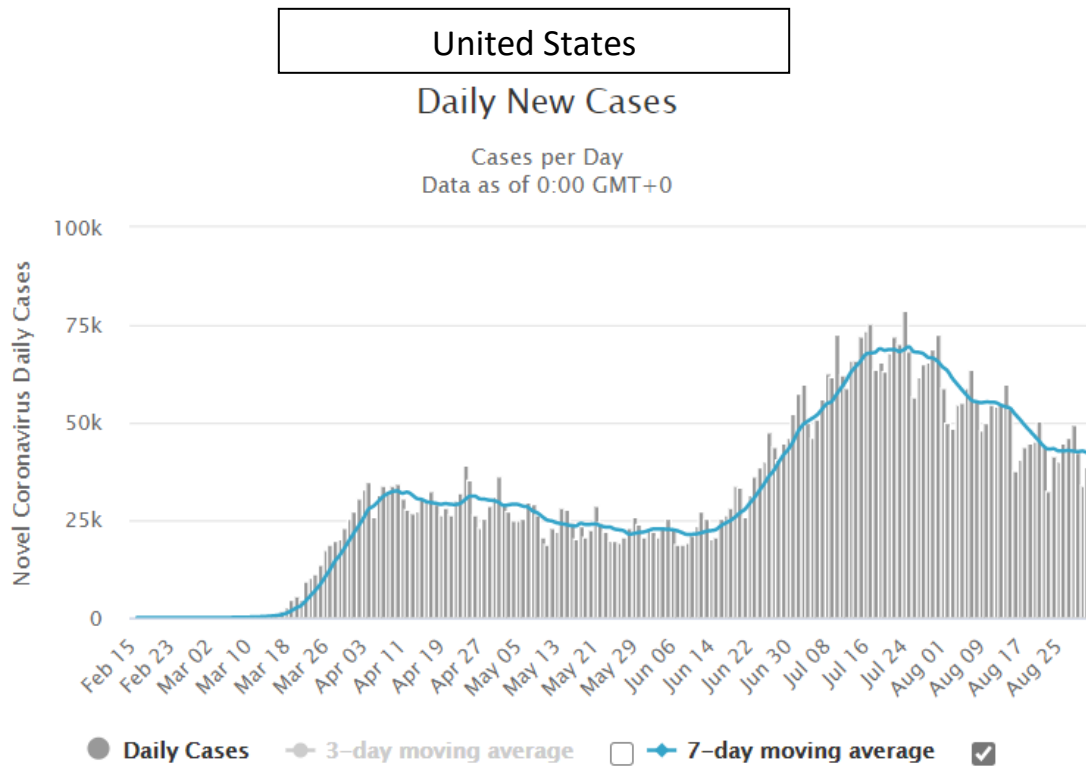


## Covid-19 Contact Testing Confusion

Covid-19 has been identified in 6,047,692 people in the United States with 184,083 deaths to date. In Florida there have been 633,442 cases with 11,501 deaths.



Fewer new cases are being seen nationwide as daily numbers are coming down nearly to the levels that were seen during the lockdown months. In Florida there were fewer than 2,000 cases reported on August 30<sup>th</sup> which is more than 85% lower than the peak in July. The rate of positive testing in Florida is now 5.8%, and it has dropped to 8.1% in Dade County where it had been 20%. While it would be foolish to say that Florida is out of the woods with regard to Covid-19, if these trends can be maintained while continuing to further open the economy, then South Florida will be in much better shape.

Unfortunately, there is ongoing confusion in the media about how to manage key aspects of this pandemic starting with testing. A flurry of articles came out last week criticizing the CDC for updates made to their [guidance for testing](#) in which they now state that a person who has been exposed to Covid-19 but is asymptomatic may not need testing. The CDC was [accused of succumbing to political pressure](#) even though the recommendation had been vetted by health professionals including Dr. Anthony Fauci before it was presented to the Task Force. Looking at the language it appears to be reasonable and it clearly indicates that one should act to protect vulnerable individuals in one's household.

***If you have been in close contact (within 6 feet) of a person with a COVID-19 infection for at least 15 minutes but do not have symptoms:***

- *You do not necessarily need a test unless you are a vulnerable individual or your health care provider or State or local public health officials recommend you take one.*
  - *A negative test does not mean you will not develop an infection from the close contact or contract an infection at a later time.*
- *You should monitor yourself for symptoms. If you develop symptoms, you should evaluate yourself under the considerations set forth above.*
- *You should strictly adhere to CDC mitigation protocols, especially if you are interacting with a [vulnerable individual](#). You should adhere to CDC guidelines to protect vulnerable individuals with whom you [live](#).*

Someone who has been exposed, and is not at high risk for complications, who remains asymptomatic should act in a manner to isolate themselves and prevent spread, and in fact, this is what had to be done during times when testing was taking 5-7 days to get results. If you are infected but asymptomatic, you simply need to keep doing what you should already be doing to protect others. Getting a negative test result is a convenience that allows one to stop isolation sooner, but it is not critical for taking the steps to protect others if you have been exposed. There is nothing in this guidance that says asymptomatic contacts cannot be tested if it is felt to be warranted.

Several experts stated they were concerned that this change in CDC recommendations would be misunderstood and lead to less testing during a pandemic, and at a critical time as schools are reopening. [Various governmental officials](#) and some state health systems have chimed in to register their disagreement with this guidance as well. [An expert from the World Health Organization](#) (WHO) stated that testing of asymptomatic individuals *may* need to be done. However, the [recommendations on the WHO website for people](#) that have been exposed does not state that testing is needed, and only indicates that one should remain quarantined for 14 days whether you have tested positive or not. The new CDC guidance is consistent with the WHO recommendations below.

## How can we protect others and ourselves if we don't know who is infected?

### What should I do if I have come in close contact with someone who has COVID-19?

If you have been in close contact with someone with COVID-19, you may be infected.

Close contact means that you live with or have been in settings of less than 1 metre from those who have the disease. In these cases, it is best to stay at home.

However, if you live in an area with malaria or dengue fever it is important that you do not ignore symptoms of fever. Seek medical help. When you attend the health facility wear a mask if possible, keep at least 1 metre distant from other people and do not touch surfaces with your hands. If it is a child who is sick help the child stick to this advice.

If you do **not** live in an area with malaria or dengue fever please do the following:

- If you become ill, even with very mild symptoms you must self-isolate
- Even if you don't think you have been exposed to COVID-19 but develop symptoms, then self-isolate and monitor yourself
- You are more likely to infect others in the early stages of the disease when you just have mild symptoms, therefore early self-isolation is very important.
- If you do not have symptoms, but have been exposed to an infected person, self-quarantine for 14 days.

If you have definitely had COVID-19 (confirmed by a test) self-isolate for 14 days even after symptoms have disappeared as a precautionary measure – it is not yet known exactly how long people remain infectious after they have recovered. Follow national advice on self-isolation.

To even suggest that that we are not doing enough testing in the U.S. is patently ridiculous. The U.S. has done more than 83,000,000 Covid-19 tests which is more than any other country in the world except China at 160,000,000 per [data on worldometer](#). We are doing more testing than

China on a per capita basis and are among the highest nations for testing at number 18 on the list below as shown in the column on the right.

#	Country, Other	Total Cases	New Cases	Total Deaths	New Deaths	Total Recovered	Active Cases	Serious, Critical	Tot Cases/ 1M pop	Deaths/ 1M pop	Total Tests	Tests/ 1M pop
1	<a href="#">Faeroe Islands</a>	411				374	37	2	8,406		97,762	1,999,427
2	<a href="#">Andorra</a>	1,184		53		908	223	3	15,320	686	137,457	1,778,550
3	<a href="#">Monaco</a>	140		1		90	49	1	3,563	25	51,953	1,322,296
4	<a href="#">Gibraltar</a>	295	+5			240	55		8,757		35,256	1,046,514
5	<a href="#">Luxembourg</a>	6,702		124		N/A	N/A	2	10,677	198	646,620	1,030,181
6	<a href="#">Bermuda</a>	172		9		157	6		2,764	145	45,756	735,178
7	<a href="#">UAE</a>	71,540	+735	387	+3	62,029	9,124		7,219	39	7,257,053	732,254
8	<a href="#">Bahrain</a>	52,440		190		49,395	2,855	37	30,651	111	1,118,837	653,949
9	<a href="#">Falkland Islands</a>	13				13	0		3,719		2,256	645,309
10	<a href="#">Iceland</a>	2,121	+5	10		2,016	95		6,209	29	218,917	640,816
11	<a href="#">Cayman Islands</a>	205		1		204	0		3,113	15	35,574	540,211
12	<a href="#">Channel Islands</a>	630		48		545	37		3,618	276	83,755	480,975
13	<a href="#">Malta</a>	1,931	+22	13	+1	1,490	428		4,371	29	194,576	440,469
14	<a href="#">Denmark</a>	17,195	+111	626	+1	15,413	1,156	4	2,967	108	2,526,753	435,968
15	<a href="#">Singapore</a>	56,901	+49	27		55,891	983		9,713	5	2,068,284	353,058
16	<a href="#">Israel</a>	121,023	+2,485	969	+12	97,218	22,836	422	13,158	105	2,354,222	255,961
17	<a href="#">Russia</a>	1,005,000	+4,952	17,414	+115	821,169	166,417	2,300	6,886	119	37,100,000	254,205
18	<a href="#">USA</a>	6,274,487	+16,916	189,335	+435	3,512,533	2,572,619	15,088	18,937	571	83,694,418	252,597
19	<a href="#">Australia</a>	25,923	+104	663	+6	21,690	3,570	23	1,015	26	6,319,795	247,351
20	<a href="#">UK</a>	338,676	+1,508	41,514	+10	N/A	N/A	60	4,984	611	16,273,209	239,497

Of course, more testing does not necessarily equate with better results which we see when comparing New York which has done nearly twice as many Covid-19 tests per capita as Florida but has nearly three times as many deaths. Having fewer of the “worried well” coming in for testing may be beneficial in speeding up the turnaround time for test results for those who need results quickly. Focusing testing on sites where it can do the most good such as assisted living facilities and skilled nursing facilities, and utilizing testing for staff as is being done in Florida will make a greater impact than testing all asymptomatic contacts that have been exposed to Covid-19. It is more important to quickly identify contacts of known cases and to inform them so they can self-isolate during the asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic period and focusing more resources on that aspect of containment will better serve all of us as we head into flu season.