



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
Division of Health  
201 Wheatsworth Road  
Hamburg, New Jersey 07419  
Telephone: (973) 579-0370  
FAX: (973) 579-0399

CAROL NOVBIT  
*Administrator*

JAMES R. MCDONALD III, M.S.  
*Director / Health Officer*

## County of Sussex

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
May 5, 2020

**CONTACT:**  
**James R. McDonald III, M.S.**  
**Director / Health Officer**  
**973-579-0370**

### **2019 Novel Coronavirus: What is Contact Tracing?**

**(Hardyston, NJ)** By now, many residents have likely heard of “contact tracing” as an integral part of stopping transmission of the 2019 Novel Coronavirus in communities. The Sussex County Division of Health (SCDOH) has been working diligently to conduct contact tracing as part of its investigation protocol for confirmed cases of COVID-19, and would like to offer residents more information on what exactly contact tracing is, and how the SCDOH has implemented this strategy with the guidance and support of both the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH).

Contact tracing is a strategy for containing the spread of a communicable, or contagious, illness. During contact tracing, public health employees work with individuals confirmed to have an illness to identify those they were in close contact with during the time that the illness could be spread to others (the infectious period). Public health employees then reach out to those contacts, notify them of their exposure to a person with the communicable illness, provide them

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with information, and advise them on what actions to take to protect themselves and others. It is important to note that contacts are not given the name of the person they were exposed to, in order to protect that person's privacy.

When the SCDOH is notified of a positive case of 2019 Novel Coronavirus, most often through online reporting by a laboratory, case investigation is immediately initiated. A staff member reaches out to the individual who tested positive, asks about symptoms and other clinical information, and provides information to the individual about the disease and the latest recommendations from the CDC and NJDOH. The staff member also works with the patient to make a list of those people the patient was in close contact with, which the NJDOH defines as being within 6 feet of a person for more than 10 minutes, during the infectious period. The SCDOH then reaches out to those contacts, notifies them of their exposure to someone with COVID-19, and makes appropriate recommendations, which at this time includes self-quarantine for 14 days from their last exposure to the patient, during which they should monitor for symptoms. Contacts are instructed to reach out to a health care provider for next steps, should symptoms develop.

The SCDOH will make several attempts to reach a person who has tested positive for 2019 Novel Coronavirus. If the individual cannot be reached, a letter is mailed out to the address provided, which includes information on the disease and recommended actions, as well as a request to call the SCDOH so that contact tracing may be completed.

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The CDC has stated that contact tracing is a key strategy in preventing further spread of COVID-19. The SCDOH has been working diligently to conduct contact tracing for all positive cases that are reported, in accordance with the recommendations put forth by both the CDC and the NJDOH. The SCDOH remains grateful to all staff members and especially the many Sussex County Medical Reserve Corps volunteers who have given their time to assist in case investigations and contact tracing to stop the spread of this illness in our community.

Residents are encouraged to visit the Sussex County website at <https://sussex.nj.us/covid19> for the latest information on COVID-19 from the New Jersey Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Residents can learn more about close contacts from the New Jersey Department of Health by visiting [https://www.state.nj.us/health/cd/documents/topics/NCOV/COVID\\_FAQs\\_For\\_Close\\_Contacts\\_People\\_Testetd.pdf](https://www.state.nj.us/health/cd/documents/topics/NCOV/COVID_FAQs_For_Close_Contacts_People_Testetd.pdf).

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