



Public Health Quarantine

What is quarantine?

Quarantine refers to the separation and restriction of movement of a **well** person who has been exposed to a communicable, infectious agent. A person is quarantined to insure that he/she will not transmit infection if he/she has become infected as a result of exposure.

The word quarantine was derived from the Italian words *quaranta giorni* which means forty days. In an effort to protect Italian coastal cities from a plague epidemic during the 14th century, Venetian officials required ships arriving from infected ports to sit at anchor for forty days before landing.

Under what circumstances might quarantine be used?

Quarantine may be considered as a strategy to control an epidemic caused by an infection that can result in serious disease and that is easily spread from person-to-person, especially if:

- Vaccines and therapies to prevent infection are not available or are in limited supply
- An infected person can spread infection before he/she has symptoms of disease

Such a situation might occur early in an influenza pandemic. This is why quarantine is one of the infection control strategies that pandemic influenza planners are now considering.

How long should someone be in quarantine?

Modern quarantine lasts only as long as necessary to protect the public. The goal of quarantine is to keep people separate until it is clear that they are not infectious. The duration of quarantine will vary with the disease.

An exposed person might be quarantined until he/she receives a vaccine or therapy that insures that he/she is not infectious. If a vaccine or therapy is not available, the period of quarantine is likely to be based on the duration of the incubation period. The incubation period is the time from exposure to the development of symptoms. For example, quarantine of a person exposed to pandemic influenza would last for one incubation period. For annual influenza, the incubation period usually is as long as four days; however, this period could be different for a new type of influenza virus.

Is quarantine mandatory?

A person who has been exposed to a communicable disease may be asked to voluntarily quarantine himself / herself or quarantine may be mandatory. The US Secretary of Health and Human Services has the responsibility for preventing the introduction and spread of certain communicable diseases from foreign countries and from one state to another. The communicable diseases for which quarantine can be imposed by the Federal government are set out in a Presidential executive order. Currently they are cholera, diphtheria, infectious tuberculosis, plague, smallpox, yellow fever, viral hemorrhagic fevers, SARS and influenza caused by novel or re-emergent influenza viruses that are causing, or have the potential to

cause, a pandemic.

Within the State of Connecticut, a local health director has the authority to order a person quarantined, if he/she:

- Has reasonable grounds to believe the person is infected with a communicable disease or contaminated, **and**
- Determines that the person poses a substantial threat to the public health, **and**
- Determines that quarantine is necessary to protect or preserve the public health and is the least restrictive means necessary.

A quarantined person has a right to a hearing, right to an attorney, and right to cross-examination [Connecticut Statutes, Section 19a-221]. In the event that the Governor declares a public health emergency, similar authority to quarantine is extended to the Connecticut Commissioner of Public Health and local health directors must carry out quarantine orders made by the Commissioner [Connecticut Statutes, Section 19a-131b].

What do people in quarantine need?

Quarantine may be undertaken for the common good. However, it is very disruptive to the lives of those of whom it is requested or on whom it is imposed. Whenever possible, people should be quarantined at home. According to Connecticut Statutes, the needs of persons in quarantine shall be addressed in a systematic and competent fashion, including but not limited to providing adequate food, clothing, shelter, means of communication with those outside quarantine, medication and quality medical care.

Sources:

- American Red Cross & CDC. Controlling the Spread of Contagious Disease. Available at: http://www.redcross.org/preparedness/cdc_english/IsoQuar.asp#how
- CDC. History of Quarantine. Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dq/history.htm>
- CDC. Fact Sheet. Isolation and Quarantine. Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dq/isolationquarantine.htm>
- Questions and Answers on the Executive Order Adding Potentially Pandemic Influenza Viruses to the List of Quarantinable Disease. Available at: http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dq/ga_influenza_amendment_to_eo_13295.htm
- State of Connecticut Statutes Sections 19a-221 and 19a-131b. Available at: <http://www.cga.ct.gov/asp/menu/Statutes.asp>



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The Yale CPHP is funded by the CDC through Cooperative Agreement #U90/CCU124251-02

Mission: As part of a national network of Centers for Public Health Preparedness that are funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Yale Center for Public Health Preparedness, based at the Yale School of Public Health, works to ensure that frontline public health workers are prepared to respond to public health emergencies including natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and disease outbreaks.

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