

Quarantine: An Effective Public Health Tool

This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC – safer, healthier people.

“A quarantine is when people have been exposed to a disease perhaps.”

“They’ll generally put a sign on your house if you have a communicable disease.”

“You are basically away from certain things.”

“Extreme seclusion.”

“Locked in your house, basically.”

Quarantine is an effective public health tool and it’s especially important when we don’t have other tools to combat a certain disease. Quarantine is used for separating people who are not yet ill but have been exposed to a contagious from others who have not yet been exposed. When someone has been exposed to an important, serious contagious disease, there are several options.

For instance, if you were on a plane or in a building that had a report of a contagious disease, you could be delayed a few hours, examined by a medical doctor, and then allowed to leave after providing your contact information. You could be quarantined for a short time in a facility where you can be given a vaccine or preventative treatment or be kept for the entire incubation period of the disease, monitored, and cared for. You also could be asked to stay at home, limiting your contact with others. In rare instances, a large-scale quarantine could involve home curfews, the cancellation of mass gatherings, and the closure of mass transit.

In the modern era, we place much more emphasis on providing support and medical care for those in quarantine, making sure they get what they need so they can stay in quarantine and making sure they get the medical care that they need if they become ill.

If a person starts to exhibit symptoms of a serious, contagious disease, they may be isolated.

Quarantine can usually be done in a home, where as isolation is usually done in the hospital where the ill person can receive medical care.

Neither a quarantine or isolation may ever happen to us. But it’s something we should all be prepared for.

We need to talk about quarantine because we may need to use it, given the new types of infectious disease threats we have in the modern society. We also need

to talk about quarantine because the more people understand about it, the better able they are to cooperate with it and the more effective it will be.

It may not be easy to be in quarantine, but it's very important to help protect the health of you, your family, and your community.

To access the most accurate and relevant health information that affects you, your family, and your community, please visit www.cdc.gov.