

'Quaranpod' Discussion Checklist

This is a living document organized by Joseph Osmundson, PhD
with guidance from the [COVID-19 Working Group](#)
Diagnostics and Treatment subgroup and input from
experts in epidemiology, virology, and immunology¹

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(October 2020): In North America, we are approaching the Winter months, with shorter days and colder temperatures. The ability to mitigate COVID-19 risk by moving social interactions outside will be significantly more difficult. Other methods of **Non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs, ways to prevent COVID-19 infection)** will be critical in these months to continue slowing the progression of COVID-19 in our communities and to protect the most vulnerable – and ourselves. **Quaranpods** evolved this Spring as a way to **maintain essential social interaction** while **minimizing COVID-19 risk**. This document is meant to guide individuals as they discuss how to manage COVID-19 risk over the coming months.

What is a 'quaranpod'?

A quaranpod is a group of people who agree to interact normally with each other while maintaining strict social distancing and other measures to avoid COVID-19 in public and with people outside of the pod. The ways in which pod members interact with each other should be discussed and agreed upon when forming the pod. When circumstances arise in which a pod member has or will have an external interaction that 'breaks the pod rules', this is discussed beforehand with all pod members to determine how to handle the situation safely. The benefit of being in a pod is that you have a group of people with whom you can interact normally. But the pod only works to protect you and the other members if everyone agrees to a set of rules and strictly follows them. **The individual risks of pod members become risk factors for the entire group, and so should be negotiated honestly beforehand.** The success of the pod is based on trust. Everyone in the pod is dependent on one another to follow the rules and stay safe!

Remember that methods to avoid getting infected with COVID-19, which include **mask wearing**, staying **six or more feet from others**, moving activities **outdoors**, maintaining good **ventilation** of indoor spaces, **staying home** when ill, and aggressive **testing and tracing** are additive. The more you do the better. The fewer you do, the higher the risk.

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Vaccination update (March 2021):

Late in 2020, Moderna² and Pfizer³ were granted EUAs (Emergency Use Authorizations) for highly effective mRNA vaccines that prevent 95% of symptomatic COVID-19 cases. Subsequently, Johnson and Johnson⁴ earned an EUA for its one-shot adenoviral vector vaccine, which has comparable effectiveness.

All of these vaccines are highly effective at preventing disease, hospitalization, and death **among vaccinated individuals**. These vaccines also likely prevent or attenuate COVID-19 transmission, although scientists are still working to determine how effective they are in the real world⁵. **The effects of vaccination are not immediate**; check with your health care provider on when immunity is conferred by the vaccination you receive (Pfizer and Moderna appear to have moderate efficacy after two weeks and high efficacy one week after the second dose).

The CDC is [expected to release](#) updated guidance for vaccinated individuals shortly; this document will be updated with those guidelines when they are public.

Given the arrival of COVID-19 vaccines, **pods may want to alter some of their rules**. Here are some guiding questions for conversations about COVID-19 risk in 2021:

- Is everyone in your pod vaccinated?
 - It is still possible (albeit unlikely) to get symptomatic COVID-19 after vaccination, and therefore unvaccinated individuals in your home or pod may be at risk if you are infected.
- Once **someone** in your pod/family is vaccinated, will they be able to change any risk behaviors (social engagements, gym, hookups, travel)?
- Will vaccinated people be allowed to see people outside the pod? If so, will they inquire about the vaccination status of those people?
- Will mask wearing and distancing be used by vaccinated people? Will meeting indoors or outdoors be allowed?
- Will vaccination of your pod change your plans around COVID-19 testing, isolation following travel, isolation following exposure?
 - The CDC guidelines on isolation following exposure or travel for vaccinated individuals is shifting. Check for updates here (scroll to “Public health recommendations for vaccinated people”):

<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/info-by-product/clinical-considerations.html>

- Once **everyone** in your pod/family is vaccinated, will people be able to change any risk behaviors? Will you still wear masks? Will you travel? Together or separately? Will you

² <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMoa2035389>

³ <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMoa2034577>

⁴ <https://www.fda.gov/media/146217/download>

⁵ <https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-67362100448-7/fulltext>

allow social interactions? With other vaccinated people? With unvaccinated people? Will you allow larger gatherings? Will you check the vaccination status of those you interact with? If so, how?

- Once everyone in your pod is vaccinated, will you still engage in a COVID-19 testing plan?
- How will you consider **vaccine access to others in your pod and community** while supply is still limited?
 - Do you have a plan for helping others in your pod/community get access to vaccination when they are allowed?

In developing rules in your pod, here are some questions to consider (October 2020):

Inside pod rules

- What will social interactions with your pod look like?
- Masked vs unmasked? Will you meet inside?
- How often will you see one another?
- Will it always be the large group, or can individuals within the pod hang alone too?
- How long will hangouts be?
- Will you maintain distance while hanging out?
- Will hangouts be at home or in other spaces (restaurants, museums); will hangouts not at home be outside only?
- How are you mitigating risk at home?
- What are your expectations for hygiene?
- Will you have regular meetings to discuss the changes in the local situation, test positivity rate, COVID-19 prevalence, and, I mean, "Hey, how are you doing with all this?"
- How will you handle possible rule breaks?
- How and how often will you communicate potential risky behaviors that are within the limits you set (e.g. hookups or social activities)? Weekly phone call? Weekly email? Google doc? Logsheet?
- **Initiating the pod:** How will you decide it's safe to start in person, indoor hangs? Will you test prior to starting, will you completely isolate, if so for how long? [Link](#) to an epidemiologists Twitter guide to pod initiation.

Outside Pod rules

- Are individual social interactions with those **outside the pod** permitted? Only outdoors? Only with permission?
- Are people allowed to be in other pods, too?
- What about **partners and/or roommates**? Can they be in other pods or not agree to the pod-contract?

Outside risks

- Who is working from home? Who has a higher-risk job (with lots of social interactions, like teaching or childcare or service)?
- For those with high risk jobs (health care workers, essential workers): How will you communicate potential exposures? What in particular will lead to isolating from the pod? If you isolate, how can the pod support you?

- How do people view certain riskier activities (outdoor dining, indoor dining, airplane travel, going to **the gym** indoors, **outdoor exercise** without a mask)?
- Are you taking the subway? Only Uber/Lyft? Biking/walking?
- Does anyone have children? Do the children have interactions outside the pod (school, friends)?
- What about interactions like doctor appointments or having someone enter your home for repairs or deliveries?
- How does each member view the risks of activities like grocery shopping, food delivery, takeout dinners, running errands, etc?
- Are there couples? Single people? **How is sex⁶ being managed** by those having sex outside the pod? What risks are acceptable? What would make people uncomfortable?

Testing plan

- How often will people get **tested**⁷? Every month? After exposure?
- How and where will people get tested? Whose insurance/city covers unlimited testing? Who may need financial (or emotional) support for testing?
- How will a positive antibody test⁸ or previous COVID-19 infection³ affect pod rules?

Changes in pod size or composition

- How will you deal with conflict about risk, or if someone isn't following the agreed upon guidelines?
- Will you be able to change your quaran-contract over time? If so, how?
- What steps will be taken if someone isn't committed to the agreement? How will people be removed from the pod if needed?
- Can people be added to the pod? If so, how? Does everyone have to agree? Should the person be friends with all, or just one or two members?

Care plan for exposure or illness

- If someone in the pod has a **known exposure**, how will they re-enter the pod? Reminder that a negative test does not necessarily indicate someone will not test positive later. The **CDC recommends a 14 day quarantine** post-COVID-19 exposure.
- How will you deal with a **known case** of COVID-19 within the pod? Contact tracing? Quarantining? How long?
- How will you support a member who tests positive for COVID-19 or is sick? Food support? Emotional support?
- Does each pod member have a safe place to isolate if ill?

⁶ Sex itself isn't a COVID-19 risk; the virus is passed by mouths and noses, not sexy-bits. BUT: breathing around other people (usually done while having sex) is indeed a risk.

⁷ You want a test for acute COVID-19 infection, which includes a PCR test, rapid RNA test or rapid antigen test. Of these three, the PCR test has the lowest chance of a false negative test, which could lead to contagious people thinking they're not contagious.

⁸ It's not yet known how protected people are from a new COVID-19 infection based on prior infection and/or antibodies.

Resource sharing

- Testing and risk management require resources, including time and money. How will your pod manage its collective resources such that all are able to participate?
- Will there be a **quaranpod fund**? Each able individual could add \$100 to a collective fund for use in testing or if a member gets ill, for example. Investing in the health of one pod member is investing in the health of all.
- How will you ensure that everyone has the needed supplies for risk management, including masks (N95 or KN95 included), hand sanitizer, the ability to take Uber/Lyft if/when needed, and to cover testing and healthcare costs?
- Does your pod have a list of known COVID-19 specialist/health providers in your area and/or COVID-19 support groups for acute and long term patients (such as <https://www.wearebodypolitic.com/covid19> and <https://www.survivorcorps.com/>)?