

What is Contact Tracing?

Contact tracing is a process used by Public Health professionals to understand how an infectious disease is spreading in a community during an outbreak or a pandemic, such as COVID-19.

Regional Health Authorities in Newfoundland and Labrador have responsibility for performing contact tracing.

The contact tracing process has two purposes:

- Find out who a sick person caught an illness from; and
- Find out who they have been in contact with while they were infectious

The goal of Public Health's work is to limit the spread of a disease by finding and isolating cases.

Only those individuals or cases who are identified as close contacts, including family members, friends, and work colleagues, are notified by Public Health Nurses so that the testing process can begin.

Contact tracing usually follows these steps:

- A person identified as possibly having a communicable disease, sometimes referred to as the index case, is interviewed to learn about their movements and with whom they have been in close contact during the time they could have been infected or infected others.
- Depending on the disease, family members, friends, work colleagues, health care providers, and anyone else who may have knowledge of the case's contacts may also be interviewed.
- When contacts are identified, Public Health Nurses contact them to offer counseling, screening, and if required, testing or treatment.
- Contacts may be isolated, if deemed necessary, for disease control

Contact tracing is detailed and time-intensive work, but is crucial during an outbreak to control the spread.