Contact Tracing
Contact tracing is an important tool to track the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

What it is
• A process used to identify individuals who may have come into meaningful contact with an infected person.
• A method long used in public health to track the spread of many contagious diseases—including measles, HIV, smallpox and now COVID-19.

What it is not
• “Exposure notification” or “digital alerting,” which use consumer apps to alert individuals they may have come in contact with an infected person based on information entered into an app and regardless of the time spent with the individual.

Contact tracing process
After identifying a positive patient, public health staff will take the following steps:

1. Case investigation: Public health staff work with a patient to help them recall everyone they have had close contact with during the time they may have been infectious.
2. Contact tracing: Public health staff begin contact tracing by notifying exposed people (contacts) of their potential exposure as rapidly and sensitively as possible, not revealing the infected patient’s identity.
3. Contact support: Contacts are provided with education, information and support to help them understand their risk, what they should do to separate themselves from others who are not exposed and how to monitor themselves for illness. They also are informed of the possibility they could spread the infection to others even if they do not feel ill.
4. Self-quarantine: Contacts are encouraged to stay home, monitor their health and maintain social distance (at least 6 feet) from others until 14 days after their last exposure to the infected patient, in case they also become ill.

Conclusion
Contact tracing may not be able to eliminate the SARS-CoV-2 virus, but it can help to lessen the spread in communities and strategically protect high-risk populations. For the method to work, however, the populace must be willing to supply information to slow the spread.

Learn more on the CDC website.