

# The Psychological Impact and Stressors of Quarantine during the Respiratory Infectious Diseases Pandemic

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## Abstract

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## Introduction

Quarantine refers to the restriction and separation of people who have potentially been exposed to an infectious disease to confirm whether they are unwell, so as to reduce the risk of infecting others [1]. Isolation, which is different from quarantine, is defined as the separation between people who have been diagnosed with infectious diseases and those who do not; however, they are often used interchangeably, especially when communicating with the public [2]. Recently, quarantine has been used to prevent and control the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) during the pandemic. Lots of countries require people who have potentially been in contact with the virus infection to isolate themselves in a special quarantine facility or at home. The entire cities in China have effectively been placed under large-scale quarantine, while thousands of foreigners returning from China have been required to self-isolate themselves at home or in state-owned facilities [3]. However, quarantine is often a terrible and unpleasant experience for people who undergo it. Loss of freedom, uncertainty of disease status, and separation from loved ones create enormous effects.

The potential benefits and possible psychological costs of mandatory mass quarantine need to be carefully weighed [4]. As an effective public health measure, successful use of quarantine requires us to minimize the negative impact related to it. We undertook a mini review on the psychological impact of quarantine to discuss its possible effects on the psychological wellbeing and mental health, and the possible stressors that contribute to these effects. Previous studies showed psychological outcomes for different quarantined population. Medical staffs who directly came into contact with SARS more likely to report acute stress

disorder, exhaustion, anxiety and so on [5]. Children who were quarantined are more vulnerable to the post-traumatic stress symptoms compared with those who were not quarantined, and 28% of parents quarantined were reported to have a trauma related mental health disorder [6]. However, another study found no significant difference between quarantined undergraduates and not quarantined undergraduates [7].

Several studies showed the related quarantine of stressors, such as duration of quarantine, inadequate supplies and information, as well as fears of infection. The duration of quarantine is longer, the avoidance, angry behaviors are more common [8]. Having inadequate basic supplies such as water, food during quarantine have been associated with anxiety and anger for a long time after release [9]. What's more, people during quarantine also face challenges in accessing enough medical care and personal protection equipment [10]. In addition, many participants used poor information from public health authorities as a source of stress, reporting that clear guidelines for action were inadequate and did not know the purpose of quarantine. Overall, our study indicates that the psychological impact of quarantine is substantial and continuous. Since quarantine is necessary and essential, how to take some measures according to stressors so as to lighten the unpleasant experience during quarantine is further study.

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