CDC drops quarantine, distancing recommendations for COVID

The nation's top public health agency said Thursday it is dropping the quarantine and distancing recommendations for COVID-19 that it has recommended for more than two years.

The change in the country's public health guidance comes as the COVID-19 pandemic that has claimed more than 900,000 lives in the United States is winding down. The current recommendations have been in place since May 2020.

"Throughout this pandemic, we have worked to balance protection from COVID-19 with the need to keep people engaged in activities outside of their homes," Dr. Rochelle Walensky, the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, said in a statement.

The new guidance, which was posted on the CDC's website Thursday, says people who have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 are no longer required to quarantine if they have been vaccinated or if they are not vaccinated but have tested negative for COVID-19 within the past three days or have a negative result from a rapid antigen test.

For people who are not vaccinated, the CDC recommends they get tested within three days of exposure and isolate if the test result is positive.

The guidance also says people who have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 who is fully vaccinated or has tested negative within the past three days should wear a protective mask for 10 days after exposure.

The CDC also dropped its recommendation that people who have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 should test for COVID-19 five days after exposure and quarantine if the test result is positive.

The guidance also said people who have been vaccinated and who have tested negative within the past three days should not be quarantined after exposure.