



Questions and answers

SwissCovid app

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These answers are based on the legislation as it currently stands. The Federal Council is preparing amendments to the law in anticipation of the nationwide roll-out of the proximity tracing app. This may lead to some rules being changed.

Privacy protection

1. What data does the SwissCovid app gather?

The SwissCovid app only records contacts, i.e. when its user is less than two metres distance from another SwissCovid app user for a short period of time. Details of these contacts are stored decentrally, i.e. on the user's own mobile phone, in the form of a cryptographically generated checksum; after 21 days, these data are irretrievably deleted. This means that there is no exchange of personal data, locations or information about the device used.

2. Are the data secure?

In the event of a contact, all that is exchanged is an encrypted code. This is saved locally on the devices concerned and then automatically deleted 21 days later. This applies both to the data in the local memory of the mobile phone and to the keys related to infected users on the Federal Administration server. If the SwissCovid app is uninstalled, the data on the mobile phone is automatically deleted.

3. Has the Federal Data Protection and Information Commissioner been involved in the development of the app?

Yes, the Federal Data Protection and Information Commissioner (FDPIC) has been involved in all phases of the project; both he and the Federal Ethics Committee have been monitoring developments closely.

4. How does the app ensure that my location is not disclosed via Bluetooth?

The SwissCovid app does not use any satellite-based positioning technology. This means it is impossible to use the app to find where a person or a mobile phone is. Bluetooth Low Energy (BLE) simply allows one device to determine that it is close to another device. As Bluetooth has three levels of proximity recognition, the detection of contacts can be limited to the critical range of around two metres in open spaces.

5. Why does the SwissCovid app on Android devices require access to my location?

In order for the SwissCovid app to work and have access to Bluetooth, you have to activate the location function. On Android devices, Bluetooth sharing is coupled to location sharing. So the location

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function has to be activated even if the SwissCovid app never has access to your location via satellite positioning.

6. Are the data used to monitor the spread of the disease (statistics by commune)?

A small volume of anonymous data will be used for statistical purposes. For example, the following information will be recorded:

- number of calls to the designated hotline for users who have been messaged;
- number of app downloads from the Apple and Google stores.

7. Where are the servers for the SwissCovid-system located?

The servers are located in Swiss government data centres in Switzerland and are hosted by the Federal Administration. The list of anonymous keys relating to persons who have been infected may however be passed on to third parties, which make them available to other users.

8. Could this app be used for other purposes?

The app has been developed solely to contain the spread of the coronavirus and it will be discontinued as soon as it is no longer required for this purpose.

How it works

9. What exactly does the app do in the event of a possible infection?

The app not only checks whether there have been any contacts with infected persons, but also how long and how close these contacts were. You will only be alerted if there is adequate suspicion that you may have been infected, i.e. if you have been less than two metres away from an infected person.

10. How long must someone be in my proximity before the SwissCovid app records a contact?

People have to be less than two metres distance from each other for a short time. Only encrypted IDs, so-called checksums are exchanged via Bluetooth between the mobile phones. These distance measurements via Bluetooth will be continuously recalibrated during the test and pilot phases in order to improve their accuracy. The API announced by Google and Apple should further increase the accuracy of the measurement.

11. Can the SwissCovid app register that two people are separated by a protective wall?

Walls block the transmission of Bluetooth signals to a certain extent, so only a very few false alarms are expected in this situation. However, the app does not register Plexiglas screens, like those widely used in shops and restaurants. And of course the app cannot register whether people are wearing masks either.

12. What happens if the two people concerned are wearing masks?

The app cannot see that the two persons are wearing masks, and so will record the contact. A contact within two metres between two persons who are wearing masks is not regarded as a causing any risk of transmission. The main reason for this is that experts currently believe that the virus is normally transmitted by droplets, and masks provide adequate protection against this happening.

13. What happens if two phones are being charged next to each other, but the owners of the phones have been nowhere near each other?

If two mobile phones with the SwissCovid app installed are charging within two metres of each other, this will be recorded as a contact. The SwissCovid app cannot see whether the mobile phone is close to its owner or not.

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14. A mobile phone will encounter several hundred other devices every day. Will the SwissCovid app and the data collected use up a lot of space on my phone?

Your mobile phone only records the encrypted IDs of other mobile phones that are less than two metres away. The volume of data that is stored is very small and unproblematic given the storage capacities of modern mobile phones.

15. What are the effects on the battery?

The SwissCovid app is designed to use as little energy as possible. As Bluetooth Low Energy is always activated, energy consumption will increase slightly. The new technical interfaces introduced by Apple and Google should however reduce the energy consumption of proximity tracing apps. However, to benefit from this, mobile phones must be updated so they have the latest operating systems.

16. The app from the Federal Institutes of Technology in Zurich (ETHZ) and Lausanne (EPFL) works with its own protocol. This will then be replaced by the Apple or Google protocol. Will data security still be guaranteed?

The Apple/Google application interface (API) is not a mobile phone app. It is a standard proposed by Apple/Google in order to achieve a more accurate estimate of the distance between two mobile phones via Bluetooth, and to reduce electricity consumption by Bluetooth Low Energy. Data security remains guaranteed – the Apple/Google standard is also based on the DP-3T concept drawn up by the Federal Institutes of Technology in Zurich and Lausanne.

17. Can I receive alerts even if I don't have an internet connection?

No, the SwissCovid app cannot receive an alert if the device is not connected to the internet. For this reason, you should regularly connect your phone to the internet, whether via a mobile network or by Wi-Fi. However, it is not necessary for your smartphone to be online permanently.

18. Can I control when my data with is synchronised with the server?

Whenever the mobile phone is connected to the internet, the SwissCovid app is in regular contact with the Federal Administration server. This is necessary if the SwissCovid app is to be able to receive alerts. Users cannot control the frequency of contact with the server. However, if the mobile phone is not connected to the internet, the SwissCovid app cannot contact the server.

19. Do I have to have Bluetooth switched on all the time? What if I don't have Bluetooth switched on?

In order for the app to record contacts, Bluetooth must be switched on at all times. This only causes a slight increase in battery usage.

20. Can I use other Bluetooth functions (for example connect a headset to my phone) when the SwissCovid app is running?

Even if the SwissCovid app is active, it will still be possible to use Bluetooth to connect your headphones, etc.

21. Is it possible to switch on Bluetooth for the SwissCovid app only, and otherwise be 'unseen' as I go about my business in town?

No, this is not possible. If Bluetooth is active on the mobile phone, all the apps you have installed that have the Bluetooth function activated will use this wireless technology.

22. Can I deactivate the SwissCovid app if I want?

Yes, this is possible, for example by deactivating tracing in the app. However, the SwissCovid app only works if it is activated, so we recommend that you do not deactivate it and that you take your mobile phone with you every time you leave home and might come into contact with persons infected with the new coronavirus.

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I HAVE TESTED POSITIVE FOR CORONA: WHAT SHOULD I DO?

23. I have caught the new coronavirus – how do I communicate this using the SwissCovid app?

You can only notify the app that you are infected if this has been confirmed by a laboratory test. The cantonal medical service will call you and provide you with a code (the covidcode) that you may voluntarily enter in the app. If you are contacted by the cantonal medical service, you should tell them that you have the SwissCovid app.

24. Who notifies the SwissCovid that I have tested positive for the coronavirus?

Users of the SwissCovid app must themselves decide, if they test positive for the virus, whether they want to alert their contacts. In order to alert other app users, a covidcode must be entered into the app. People who have tested positive are given this code by a contact manager (depending on the canton, this will be an employee of the cantonal contact tracing unit, a doctor, a medical specialist or the cantonal medical officer) and should enter the code into the SwissCovid app.

25. If I get infected, am I obliged to enter the covidcode into the SwissCovid app or can I decide to keep the news to myself?

The covidcode remains valid for 24 hours after its generation by the contact management staff. Whether and when you enter it into the SwissCovid app is your decision. You are under no legal obligation to do so. Whether you enter the code or not, you will remain anonymous, i.e. no one can find out subsequently whether you entered the covidcode or not.

26. I made a mistake when entering my code and the SwissCovid app is giving me an error message. What should I do?

If you enter your covidcode wrongly during the conversation with the contact manager and the conversation is still ongoing, you can ask the contact manager to repeat the covidcode or to generate a new one. If you enter your code wrongly in the SwissCovid app after your call with the contact manager has ended, you can call the contact management unit again and ask them to generate a new covidcode. If you have lost the telephone number, contact the coronavirus infoline (+41 58 463 00 00, 24/7).

27. What should I do if I receive an alert telling me I have been in contact with an infected person?

If you receive a message from the app saying that you have been in contact with an infected person, it is your decision what you do. The app will give you the telephone number for a hotline where you can obtain further information anonymously. Whether you want to make use of that is up to you. The app will also recommend that if you develop symptoms, you should use the coronavirus check on the internet or contact your doctor, and that you should place yourself in voluntary quarantine.

28. Can I still go to work if have received a message saying I have been in contact with an infected person?

If you have symptoms, do the coronavirus check on the internet and follow the recommendations that you receive. Or call a doctor or hospital. If you have no symptoms, you can go to work. Continue to strictly follow the rules on hygiene and social distancing and keep an eye on your health. The app cannot conclusively determine whether the contact took place through a Plexiglas wall or whether you or the infected person were wearing a mask, so it would be unreasonable for it to instruct you to go into quarantine. However, voluntary quarantine is recommended if it is possible. At present, you are not entitled to continued payment of your salary if you go into voluntary quarantine.

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29. If I receive an alert, how soon should I tell my employer?

If you have spent more than 15 minutes within two metres of a person who has tested positive for the virus, you will receive an alert if this contact took place during the infectious phase. You will be requested to call the coronavirus infoline (details provided in the app) for advice on what to do next. Normally you are under no obligation to tell your employer that you have been in contact with an infected person. However, if you are advised to place yourself in voluntary quarantine, you will have little alternative but to tell your employer.

30. Will I still be paid my salary if I decide to go into quarantine?

Your employer is not obliged to continue to pay your salary if you are in voluntary quarantine. If you go into voluntary quarantine because the app has warned you that you have been in contact with an infected person, you should contact your doctor or the FOPH infoline for advice on what to do next. Your employer must continue to pay your salary if you have been told to isolate yourself by a doctor (medical certificate) or by the cantonal authorities. Quarantine based on conventional contact tracing must be ordered by the cantonal authorities.

Case studies

31. I have received a message on my SwissCovid app saying that I have been in close contact with a person who has tested positive. I don't have any symptoms yet. What should I do?

As long as you do not have any symptoms, a medical examination or laboratory test is not necessary.

- You may be infectious already, without realising it.
- Protect your family, friends and those around you by avoiding any unnecessary contact with others for ten days from your contact with the infected person. The first symptoms usually develop within this period.
- Monitor your state of health.

Continue to follow the rules on hygiene and social distancing and keep an eye on how you are feeling. Do the coronavirus check if you develop any symptoms. You will then receive a recommendation based on your situation.

32. I have received a message on my SwissCovid app saying that I have been in close contact with a person who has tested positive. I am not feeling very well. What should I do?

Do the coronavirus check and follow the recommendation it gives you. Or call a doctor or a hospital. If you have symptoms that could be caused by the new coronavirus, is it advisable to get yourself tested.

- You could already be infectious.
- Protect your family, friends and those around you by staying at home and avoiding any unnecessary contact with others.
- Follow the instructions on voluntary quarantine at least until you have received your test result.
- This way you will help to break the chain of infection.

You will find further useful information on the FOPH website.

33. I have received a message on my SwissCovid app saying that I have been in close contact with a person who has tested positive. Do I have to tell everyone that I have been in contact with? What do they have to do?

If you don't have any symptoms, you don't need to tell anyone. If you have symptoms, do the coronavirus check and follow the recommendation it gives you. Or call a doctor or a hospital.

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34. I have received a message on my SwissCovid app saying that I have been in close contact with a person who has tested positive. I have always worn a mask when I am outside my home. What should I do?

Continue to follow the rules on hygiene and social distancing. They are still important even if you wear a mask. As you always wear a mask, it is less likely that you have been infected, but it is still possible. If you develop the standard symptoms, you should certainly seek medical advice and get yourself tested.

35. I have received a message on my SwissCovid app saying that I have been in close contact with a person who has tested positive. Can I demand a test?

As long as you do not have any symptoms, a medical examination or a laboratory test is not necessary. If you want, you can contact your doctor and discuss the situation. Ultimately it is up to your doctor to decide whether a test is needed or not. If you have symptoms that could be caused by the new coronavirus, you are recommended to get yourself tested. Do the coronavirus check and follow the recommendation it gives you. Or call a doctor or a hospital.

COSTS

36. Do I have to pay anything to install the app on my mobile phone?

No, you can install the SwissCovid app free of charge. Once it has been made fully available, it can be downloaded for free from the app stores. Your provider may charge you for transferring data, but otherwise using the SwissCovid app costs nothing.

37. Is there any charge for sending or receiving an alert?

For the SwissCovid app to receive an alert, your phone must be connected to the internet. If the mobile data function on your mobile phone is activated, depending on your contract, you may incur costs for transferring data.

38. How much has it cost to develop this app and who is paying for it?

It is not yet possible to say how much it has cost to develop the app. The initial costs of the app's conception and prototyping have been covered by research funding given to the EPFL/ETHZ. The federal government is paying for the app's further development and operation.

MISCELLANEOUS

39. What if I lose my mobile phone or buy a new one?

The contacts that you have had in the past 21 days are stored locally on your device. These data cannot be recovered if you lose your phone or buy a new one. The SwissCovid app must be reinstalled on your new phone. From then on, contacts will be stored on your mobile phone again and automatically and irretrievably deleted after 21 days.

40. Can a shop or restaurant demand that customers have the app installed before being allowed on their premises?

The pilot phase is regulated in an ordinance. Under this ordinance, private individuals cannot be prevented from making the app a requirement for going to a gym or a restaurant, for example. The FOPH recommends, however, that the app be regarded as voluntary only, even by members of the public, as it cannot provide any information on whether a person is healthy or not.

41. Can the SwissCovid app be installed on fitness trackers and smartwatches as well?

The SwissCovid app can be installed on other mobile devices provided they meet the following requirements:

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- Their operating system is up-to-date (iOS: version 13 or newer; Android: version 6 or newer)
- They can access the Apple or Google app stores
- They have an internet connection
- Bluetooth (BLE) is active
- They have 10 MB free computer memory

Many fitness trackers do not meet these requirements.

42. Will the SwissCovid app work when I am abroad or using the network of a foreign provider?

The SwissCovid app works everywhere, even via international providers. However, it makes little sense to use the SwissCovid app abroad, as you are unlikely to encounter many or indeed any other users of the app. Efforts are currently being made to make all tracing apps that use the DP-3T decentralised concept compatible with each other. Initially, however, the SwissCovid app has been conceived for use in Switzerland. Cross-border commuters and people who regularly spend time in Switzerland will benefit from downloading and using the SwissCovid app. The SwissCovid app is basically available to everyone.

43. What are the initial results of the tests that have been conducted with the Swiss Armed Forces?

These tests related primarily to technical calibration issues, in order to improve distance measurement capabilities based on Bluetooth.

44. Is the SwissCovid app barrier-free?

When the SwissCovid app is officially launched, it should be useable by people with visual impairments.

45. What percentage of the population must use this app for it to be effective?

The more people that use the app, the more effective it will be and the higher the probability will be that relevant contacts can be recognised and reported. Digital applications can complement conventional contact tracing by the cantons and help to find who has been in contact with people who have recently been infected. According to a study by Oxford University, 55 to 65 per cent of the population must cooperate with quarantine measures during the containment phase if the epidemic is to be contained. Conventional contact tracing and the app complement each other.

46. What is the relationship between the SwissCovid app and conventional contact tracing?

People who are alerted by the app will have no direct involvement with conventional contact tracing. This will only happen if they are put in contact with the cantonal medical office through normal medical channels, i.e. by the doctor treating them. If a person has tested positive for the virus, the test result is reported in accordance with the obligation imposed under the Epidemics Act. This allows the cantonal medical office responsible for identifying contacts to call the person concerned in order to make sure that he or she is in isolation and to make a list of his or her close contacts. If the person tested has the app, the cantonal medical office will generate the covidcode on the FOPH's website, with only the tested persons having rights of access.

47. Why should I use the SwissCovid app if it only tells me what I already know anyway: that I should go to the doctor if I have any symptoms.

The App helps to show you that you have to been exposed to a risk. You can then watch out for any symptoms developing in the next few days and act accordingly if they do. You can also protect your family, your friends and those around you by avoiding any unnecessary contact with others for ten days from when you were in contact with the infected person.

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