



COVID-19 TESTING AND EXPOSURE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What kind of tests are being used to test for COVID-19?

Viral (nucleic acid) tests. These tests are used to detect the presence of genetic material from the COVID-19 virus. It identifies the virus in respiratory samples, such as from swabs from the inside of your nose.

What is COVID-19 antibody testing?

Antibody testing checks a sample of a person's blood to look for antibodies to the virus that causes COVID-19. When someone gets COVID-19, their body usually makes antibodies. However, it typically takes one to three weeks to develop these antibodies. Some people may take even longer to develop antibodies, and some people may not develop antibodies at all. A positive result from this test may mean that person was previously infected with the virus.

Antibody tests cannot be used to diagnose COVID-19. To see if you are currently infected, you need a viral test.

It is not known yet if having antibodies to the virus that causes COVID-19 can protect someone from getting infected again or, if they do, how long this protection might last.

If you have recovered from COVID-19, will you be immune to it?

It is not known yet if people who recover from COVID-19 can get infected again.

What does it mean if my COVID-19 viral test is positive?

If you have a positive test result, it is very likely that you have COVID-19. Therefore, it is also likely that you may be placed in isolation to avoid spreading the virus to others. The COVID-19 diagnostic test is highly specific and false positives are incredibly rare. If you get a positive result, you should contact your medical provider or the local health department immediately.

What does a negative COVID-19 viral test mean?

A negative test result means the virus that causes COVID-19 was not found in your sample. However, it is possible for this test to give a negative result that is incorrect (false negative) in some people with COVID-19. This means that you could have COVID-19, even though the test result is negative.

There are several reasons for a possible false negative, including but not limited to:

- Inadequate specimen collection
- Testing too early in the course of infection
- Testing too late (you are already partially recovered)

Can someone test negative and later test positive on a viral test for COVID-19?

Yes, it is possible. You may test negative if the sample was collected early in your infection and test positive later during this illness. You could also be exposed to COVID-19 after the test and get infected then. Even if you test negative, you still should take steps to protect yourself and others by:

- Wearing cloth face coverings or masks that cover your mouth and nose.
- Washing your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after you have been in a public place or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- Social distancing – limit face-to-face contact with others and stay at least 6 feet from others.

Who is considered a close contact to someone with COVID-19?

A close contact is defined as anyone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes starting from 48 hours before the person began feeling sick, until the time the patient was isolated.

What can a person diagnosed with COVID-19 expect to happen during contact tracing?

If you are diagnosed with COVID-19, a case investigator from the health department *may* call you to check on your health, discuss who you've been in contact with, and ask where you've spent time to determine if you spread COVID-19 to others. You will also be asked to stay at home and self-isolate, if you are not doing so already.

- Your name *will not* be revealed to those you may have exposed, even if they ask.
- Self-isolation means staying at home in a specific room away from other people and pets and using a separate bathroom, if possible.
- If you need support or assistance while self-isolating, your health department may be able to aid.

What can close contacts expect to happen during contact tracing?

If you have been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19, a contact tracer from the health department *may* contact you to inform you that you've been exposed to COVID-19.

You should stay at home and self-quarantine for 14 days, starting from the last day you were possibly exposed to COVID-19. The contact tracer will help identify the dates of your self-quarantine. The contact tracer can also provide resources about COVID-19 testing in your area.

- Self-quarantine means staying home, monitoring your health, and maintaining 6-foot social distance from others.
- If you need to be around other people or animals in or outside of the home, wear a cloth face covering. This will help protect the people around you.
- If you need support or assistance with self-quarantine, your health department may be able to aid.

What is the difference between quarantine and isolation?

For people who test positive for COVID-19, quarantine and isolation are essentially the same thing. However, the difference is important, as it relates to individuals who may have been exposed to someone with COVID-19.

Quarantine is used to keep someone who has been exposed to COVID-19 away from others.

Quarantine helps prevent the spread of disease that can occur before a person knows they are sick or if they are infected with the virus without feeling symptoms. People in quarantine should stay home, separate themselves from others, monitor their health, and follow directions from their state or local health department.

Anyone who has had prolonged exposure (less than 6 feet for greater than 15 minutes) to someone with COVID-19 should:

- Stay home until 14 days after your last exposure.
- Check your temperature twice a day and watch for symptoms of COVID-19.
- If possible, stay away from people who are at higher risk for getting very sick from COVID-19.

Isolation is used to separate people infected with COVID-19 (those who are sick with COVID-19 and those with no symptoms) from people who are not infected. People who are in isolation should stay home until it's safe to be around others, following guidance from a medical provider or local health department. In the home, anyone sick or infected should separate themselves from others by staying in a specific room or area and using a different bathroom, if available.

Regardless of your test results, if you are experiencing symptoms, stay home and consult your medical provider or health department.

Symptoms may appear 2 to 14 days after exposure to the virus. People with these symptoms may have COVID-19:

- Fever or chills
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Muscle or body aches
- New loss of taste or smell
- Congestion or runny nose
- Diarrhea
- Cough
- Fatigue
- Headache
- Sore throat
- Nausea or vomiting

If you have any of the above symptoms, please stay home and consult your local health department or medical provider.

When to Seek Emergency Medical Attention

Look for emergency warning signs* for COVID-19. If you are showing any of these signs, seek emergency medical care immediately:

- Trouble breathing
- New confusion
- Bluish lips or face
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- Inability to wake or stay awake

Call 911 – Notify the operator that you are seeking care for someone who has or may have COVID-19.

*This list does not include all possible symptoms. Please call your medical provider for any other symptoms that are severe or concerning to you.

These recommendations are consistent with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and will continue to be updated to accommodate new scientific evidence, evolving epidemiology, and the need to simplify risk assessment. Last Updated: 6/30/2020

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/testing.html>