



COVID-19

We have the tools to
Fight Omicron



Vaccines & Booster



Masks



Testing

COVID-19 Testing: What You Need to Know

Updated Dec. 29, 2021

CDC has updated isolation and quarantine recommendations for the public. These recommendations do not supersede state, local, tribal, or territorial laws, rules, and regulations. Read [CDC's media statement](#).

Testing is very important to help reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Types of COVID-19 Tests

COVID-19 tests can detect either **SARS-CoV-2**, the virus that causes COVID-19, or **antibodies** that your body makes after getting COVID-19 or after getting vaccinated.

Tests for **SARS-CoV-2** tell you [if you have an infection](#) at the time of the test. This type of test is called a “viral” test because it looks for viral infection. Antigen or [Nucleic Acid Amplification Tests \(NAATs\)](#) are viral tests.

Tests for **antibodies** may tell you [if you have had a past infection](#) with the virus that causes COVID-19. Your body creates antibodies after getting infected with SARS-CoV-2 or after getting vaccinated against COVID-19. These tests are called “antibody” or “serology” tests.

Viral Tests

A **viral test** tells you if you are infected with SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. There are two types of viral tests: rapid tests and laboratory tests. Viral tests use samples that come from your nose or mouth. Rapid tests can be performed in minutes and can include antigen and some NAATs. Laboratory tests can take days to complete and include RT-PCR and other types of NAATs. Some test results may need confirmatory testing.

Self-tests are rapid tests that can be taken at home or anywhere, are easy to use, and produce rapid results. COVID-19 [self-tests](#) are one of many risk-reduction measures, along with vaccination, masking, and physical distancing, that protect you and others by reducing the chances of spreading COVID-19.

Antibody Tests

An **antibody test** (also known as a serology test) can detect antibodies to SARS-CoV-2 in your blood. **Antibodies** are proteins that your immune system makes to help fight infection and protect you from getting sick in the future.

Antibody tests should not be used to diagnose a current infection, but may indicate if you had a past infection. Antibody tests help scientists learn about how human immune systems defend against the virus, as well as learn about population-level protection.

Antibody testing is [not currently recommended](#) to determine:

- If you have a current infection.
- If you have immunity to SARS-CoV-2 following COVID-19 vaccination.
- Whether you need to get vaccinated if you are not fully vaccinated.
- Whether you need to quarantine after a known or suspected exposure to COVID-19.

You should always discuss your test results with your healthcare provider.

Testing Tools

These chatbots ask a series of questions, and provide recommended actions and resources based on your responses.



Coronavirus Self-Checker

A tool to help you make decisions on when to seek testing and medical care.

[Get Started](#)

[About the Tool](#)



COVID-19 Viral Testing Tool

A tool to help you understand COVID-19 testing options.

[Get Started](#)

[About the Tool](#)

Video and Print Resources

[Antibody Test for COVID-19](#)

[Viral Test for COVID-19](#)

GOOD THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT A COVID-19 TEST | COVID-19 |

FREE

COVID-19 tests are [available at no cost nationwide](#) at health centers and select pharmacies.



EFFECTIVE

COVID-19 tests are effective at detecting a COVID-19 infection.

QUICK

Current rapid COVID-19 tests provide results in 15 minutes.



www.cdc.gov/covidtesting

WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN GETTING TESTED | COVID-19 |

Most COVID-19 tests use swabs to gather samples.

You can get your test results as quickly as 15 minutes or up to a few days, depending on the type of test.



Some testing locations may be crowded. While you are waiting to get your test and results, wear a mask and stay at least 6 feet apart from others.

Your Results

If you test **NEGATIVE** for COVID-19, the virus was not detected.

- You are likely not infected.
- For more information about the types of COVID-19 tests and why you might have tested negative, go to www.cdc.gov/covidtesting.



If you test **POSITIVE** take [steps to protect others](#) regardless of your COVID-19 vaccination status.

- Isolate from others for at least 10 days since symptoms first appeared.
- Avoid contact with other members of your household and pets.



www.cdc.gov/covidtesting

What to Expect When Getting Tested

[PDF - 183 KB, 1 page]

Good Things to Know About A COVID-19 Test

[PDF - 55KB, 1 Page]

DO YOUR PART: GET TESTED | COVID-19 |

You have an important role to play in stopping this pandemic.



If you have symptoms, especially if you've been around someone with COVID-19, you should get tested as soon as possible.

By getting tested, you protect the health of those you love and everyone around you.



Encourage your friends and family to get tested if they have symptoms.



www.cdc.gov/covidtesting

Do Your Part: Get Tested

[PDF - 426 KB, 1 Page]

COVID-19 TESTING IF YOU ARE VACCINATED

| COVID-19 |

You did your part by getting vaccinated, but you still have an important role to play in stopping this pandemic.

Even though it's rare, some people who are vaccinated still get COVID-19.



So, if you have symptoms, especially if you've been around someone with COVID-19, you should get tested.



By getting tested you protect the people around you, including your loved ones.




Encourage your friends and family to get vaccinated.

Remember, if you feel sick, get tested.



www.cdc.gov/covidtesting

COVID-19 Testing If You Are Vaccinated

 [PDF - 1 page, 129 KB]



3 Key Steps to Take While Waiting for Your COVID-19 Test Result

To protect yourself and others regardless of your vaccination status, take these **3 key steps NOW** while waiting for your test results:

1 Stay home and monitor your health.

Stay home and monitor your health to help protect your friends, family, and others from possibly getting COVID-19 from you.

Stay home and away from others:

- If possible, stay away from others, especially people who are at higher risk for getting very sick from COVID-19, such as older adults and people with other medical conditions.
- If you have been in [contact](#) with someone with COVID-19, stay home and away from others for 14 days after your last [contact](#) with that person. Follow the recommendations of your local public health department if you need to quarantine.
- If you have a fever, cough or other symptoms of COVID-19, stay home and away from others (except to get medical care).



Monitor your health:

• Watch for fever, cough, shortness of breath, or other symptoms of COVID-19. Remember, symptoms may appear 2–14 days after exposure to COVID-19 and can include:

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



2 Think about the people you have recently been around.

If you are diagnosed with COVID-19, a public health worker may call you to check on your health, discuss who you have been around, and ask where you spent time while you may have been able to spread COVID-19 to others. While you wait for your COVID-19 test result, think about everyone you have been around recently. This will be important information to give health workers if your test is positive.

Complete the information on the back of this page to help you remember everyone you have been around.

3 Answer the phone call from the health department.

If a public health worker calls you, answer the call to help slow the spread of COVID-19 in your community.

- Discussions with health department staff are **confidential**. This means that your personal and medical information will be kept private and only shared with those who may need to know, like your health care provider.
- Your name will not be shared with those you came in [contact](#) with. The health department will only notify people you were in close [contact](#) with (within 6 feet for more than 15 minutes) that they might have been exposed to COVID-19.



COVID-19 PATTERNS

cdc.gov/coronavirus

3 Key Steps to Take While Waiting for Your COVID-19 Test Results

 [PDF - 2 Pages, 230 KB]

What Your Test Results Mean

Accessible version available at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/testing/faq-quick-testing.html>

If you test positive for COVID-19

TAKE STEPS TO PROTECT OTHERS REGARDLESS OF YOUR COVID-19 VACCINATION STATUS



STAY HOME.

Isolate at home for at least 10 days. Stay in a specific room and away from other people in your home.



STAY IN TOUCH WITH YOUR DOCTOR.

Contact your doctor as soon as possible if you are an older adult or have underlying medical conditions.



GET REST AND STAY HYDRATED.

If you develop symptoms, continue to isolate for at least 10 days after symptoms began and until you do not have a fever without using medications to reduce fever.



CONTACT YOUR DOCTOR OR HEALTH DEPARTMENT ABOUT ISOLATION IF YOU

- Are severely ill or have a weakened immune system.
- Had a positive test result followed by a negative result.
- Test positive for many weeks.

If you test negative for COVID-19:

- The virus was not detected.

If you have symptoms of COVID-19:

- You may have received a false negative test result and still might have COVID-19.
- Isolate from others.

If you do not have symptoms of COVID-19 and you were exposed to a person with COVID-19:

- You are likely not infected, but you still may get sick.
- Contact your doctor about your symptoms, about follow-up testing, and how long to isolate.
- Self-quarantine for 14 days at home after your exposure.
- If you are fully vaccinated, you do not need to self quarantine.
- Contact your doctor or local health department regarding options to reduce the length of your quarantine.

A negative test result does not mean you won't get sick later.



[cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)

What Your Test Results Mean

[PDF - 216 KB, 1 page]

Need a COVID-19 test?

REASONS TO GET TESTED	TYPES OF VIRAL TESTS	ACTIONS AFTER RESULT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › If you have COVID-19 symptoms › After known or suspected exposure to COVID-19 › For screening (schools, workplaces, congregate settings, etc.) › Before travel › When asked by a healthcare professional or public health official 	<p>Laboratory Test</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Sample can either be a nasal swab or saliva › Results usually in 1–3 days › Results are reliable for people with and without symptoms › No follow-up test required › Common Example: PCR test <p>Rapid Test</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Sample is usually a nasal swab › Results usually in 15–30 minutes › Results may be less reliable for people without symptoms › Follow-up test may be required › Common Example: Antigen test 	<p>If positive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Isolate › Seek confirmatory, follow-up laboratory test if recommended by healthcare professional › Monitor your symptoms <p>If negative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › If fully vaccinated, return to normal activities. Wear a mask indoors in areas of high or substantial community transmission. › If not fully vaccinated and have symptoms or exposure, continue to quarantine. If no symptoms or exposure return to normal activities. Take steps to get vaccinated to protect yourself and others.



Need additional help? CDC's Viral Testing Tool is an online, mobile-friendly tool that asks a series of questions, and provides recommended actions and resources based on the user's responses.

[cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)

[JPG - 341 KB]

Need a COVID-19 Test?

Related Pages

- › [Test for Current Infection](#)
- › [Test for Past Infection](#)