



Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Test for Current Infection

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Viral tests check samples from your respiratory system, such as a swab from the inside of your nose, to tell you if you currently have an infection with SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. Some tests are point-of-care tests, meaning results might be available at the testing site in less than an hour. Other tests must be sent to a laboratory to analyze, a process that takes 1–2 days once received by the lab.




Self-Checker




A guide to help you make decisions and seek appropriate medical care.

If you test positive or negative for COVID-19 on a viral or an antibody test, you still should take preventive measures to [protect yourself and others](#).

How to get a viral test



Here is some information that might help you make decisions about getting a viral test:

- Most people have mild illness and can recover at home without medical care. Contact your healthcare provider if your symptoms are getting worse or if you have questions about your health.
- Decisions about testing are made by [state](#) and [local](#)  health departments or healthcare providers.
- If you have symptoms of COVID-19 and are not tested, it is important to stay home. [What to do if you are sick](#).
- At this time, there is no treatment specifically approved for people who have COVID-19.

COVID-19 testing differs by location. If you have symptoms of COVID-19 and want to get tested, call your healthcare provider first. You can also visit your [state](#) or [local](#)  health department's website to look for the latest local information on testing. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has authorized viral tests that let you collect either a [nasal swab](#)  or a [saliva sample](#)  at home. However, you will still need to send your sample to a laboratory for analysis.

What to do after a viral test

To get your test result, please check with the group that performed your test, such as your healthcare provider or your

[Guidance on Interpreting COVID-19 Test Results](#)   : A guide for understanding test results and determining what actions to take.

health department. Check the CDC website to [locate your health department information](#). How long it will take to get your test results back depends on the test used.

- **If you test positive for COVID-19**, know what protective steps to take [if you are sick or caring for someone](#).
- **If you test negative for COVID-19**, you probably were not infected at the time your sample was collected. However, that does not mean you will not get sick. The test result only means that you did not have COVID-19 at the time of testing. You might test negative if the sample was collected early in your infection and test positive later during your illness. You could also be exposed to COVID-19 after the test and get infected then. This means you could still spread the virus. If you develop symptoms later, you might need another test to determine if you are infected with the virus that causes COVID-19.



For Healthcare Professionals

For information on evaluating and testing, see [recommendations for reporting, testing, and specimen collection](#).

More Information

[HHS Community Based Viral Testing Sites for COVID-19](#) 

[CDC: Frequently Asked Questions on Symptoms & Testing](#)

[U.S. Food and Drug Administration FAQs on Viral Testing for SARS-CoV-2](#) 

[Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services: Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Partner Toolkit](#) 

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Content source: [National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases \(NCIRD\)](#), [Division of Viral Diseases](#)