



## At-Home COVID-19 Testing (March 19, 2021)

### Overview

This guidance is intended for individuals considering the use of home COVID-19 testing. There are two types of home options authorized by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA):

1. **At-home collection** devices, which allow an individual to collect a specimen at home and ship it to a certified lab for analysis and;
2. **At-home tests**, which permit an individual to test and obtain a result for a self-collected specimen at home. ***This guidance focuses only on at-home tests.***

### Use of at-home tests

At-home tests are one option to determine if you are infected with the virus that causes COVID-19, rather than seeking testing at your provider's office or at a designated testing site. Reasons for choosing an at-home test include:

- Convenience
- Difficulty accessing a testing location
- Concerns about getting exposed to COVID-19

Anyone who has [signs and symptoms of COVID-19](#) or had close contact with a known positive case (regardless of symptoms) should be tested for COVID-19. Additional guidance regarding [who should get tested for COVID-19](#) is available on the NCDHHS website, along with information on [how to find your testing location](#) for those who are not using at-home testing.

Some types of at-home tests require a prescription from your doctor and others are available over the counter in a pharmacy or retail store without a prescription. Some at-home tests are only for people with symptoms and others are authorized for testing even if you don't have symptoms of COVID-19. Please discuss with your provider if an at-home test is right for you.

It is important to know that results from at-home test devices might not be accepted for all purposes, such as documentation for ending quarantine, before a medical procedure, or prior to air travel. If a test result is required for a specific purpose, please check with the entity requiring it (for example, the airline or the healthcare facility) to see whether an at-home test would be acceptable.

If you decide an at-home test is the best option for you and you think you might have COVID-19, it is important to make sure you do not expose others while obtaining your test. If you are sick and considering going out to purchase an at-home test, contact the pharmacy where you intend to purchase the test to find out about options to avoid spreading the virus to others in the pharmacy.

Results of at-home tests generally take 15-20 minutes. Some tests may require a smartphone to perform the test or obtain results. Make sure to follow the directions included with your at-home test. Ensure that your at-home test has not expired or damaged and store all test components according to the manufacturer's instructions until ready for use. Additional resources on how to use at-home tests are available from the [CDC](#).

### **What if your test is positive?**

A positive test result means that you have COVID-19. You should immediately isolate following [DHHS guidance](#). Isolation means you should stay home and away from others, even inside your home. You should also notify anyone you have recently been in close contact with to let them know you tested positive for COVID-19. There are tools available to assist you in notifying your contacts anonymously, such as [TellYourContacts.org](#). If you have worsening symptoms, you should contact your healthcare provider following [DHHS guidance](#).

If you have a positive result but have no symptoms of COVID-19 and no contact to someone known to have COVID-19, you should immediately isolate following [DHHS guidance](#) and consider contacting your healthcare provider to determine if you should receive a confirmatory test or find a [testing location](#) where you can get a PCR COVID-19 test. If you do not obtain a COVID-19 confirmatory test within two days following your at-home test, you should continue to follow isolation guidance and steps above.

### **What if your test is negative?**

If you do not have symptoms and have not had close contact with someone with COVID-19, a negative test means that you probably do not have COVID-19. You should continue to [practice the 3 Ws](#): wear a mask when you are outside your home, wait 6 feet apart from people outside of your household, and wash your hands or use hand sanitizer.

If you have a negative result and have symptoms of COVID-19 or close contact to someone known to have COVID-19, you should continue to stay home and away from others and contact your healthcare provider to determine if you should obtain a confirmatory test in case your at-home test result is not accurate. A confirmatory PCR test may be recommended for you to determine if your illness is caused by COVID-19.

### **What if your results are invalid?**

If your at-home test shows an error or invalid result, refer to the instructions in the package insert and contact the manufacturer for assistance. You may consider finding a nearby testing location or repeat the at-home test using a new at-home test device.

### **Sharing your results**

If your at-home test was prescribed by your healthcare provider, you should contact your provider with the results. If your at-home test was not prescribed and your symptoms remain mild, you should isolate and notify your contacts of your positive test, but it is not required to contact your health care provider or health department.

### **Test disposal**

After you obtain your results, discard your at-home test as described in the disposal instructions in the package insert. You cannot reuse test devices or other components. Most test kits can be disposed of in the general trash, but some kits contain batteries that have specific disposal instructions.