

COVID-19 TESTING GUIDANCE



PREVENTION ACTIONS

CDC recommends some actions be taken all the time to prevent respiratory illness, including:

- Wash your hands
- Stay up to date with vaccines
- Improve ventilation
- Get tested immediately if you have symptoms
- Follow recommendations for what to do if you have been exposed
- Stay home if you are sick

Seek treatment if you have COVID-19 or influenza and are at high risk of getting very sick.



KNOWING WHEN TO TEST

- **If you have symptoms, test immediately.**

Possible symptoms include:



Fever or chills



Cough



Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing



Fatigue



Muscle or body aches



Headache



New loss of taste or smell



Sore throat



Congestion or runny nose



Nausea or vomiting

This list does not include all possible symptoms. You cannot tell the difference between COVID-19, flu, and other respiratory illnesses by symptoms alone because some of the symptoms are the same.

- **If you were exposed to COVID-19 and do not have symptoms, wait at least 5 full days after your exposure before testing. If you test too early, you may be more likely to get an inaccurate result.**
- **Visiting friends or family? Consider testing before contact with someone at high risk for severe COVID-19.**

If you test positive, treatments are available that can reduce your chances of hospitalization and death. Speak to your doctor right away! For more information on COVID-19 treatment visit: <https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/what-to-do-if-you-feel-sick>.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT TEST

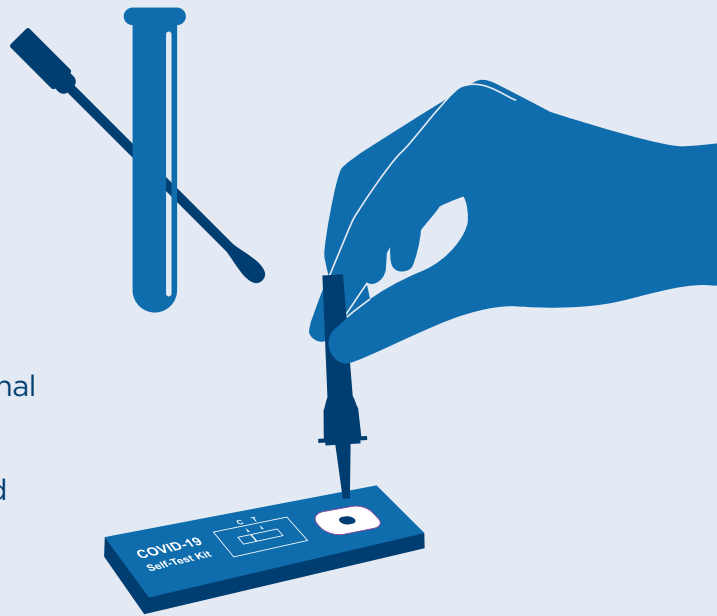
There are 2 types of tests: Molecular (such as PCR) and Antigen (rapid/self-tests).

Molecular tests

- More sensitive – can detect small amounts of virus, even if you don't have symptoms.
- Must be run in a laboratory or by a healthcare professional
- Can take 1-2 days for a result.
- You should not use a molecular test if you have tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 90 days.

Antigen tests

- Slightly less sensitive - especially for people with no symptoms.
- Can be self-administered, performed anywhere.
- Take 10-20 minutes for a result.
- Use Tips:
 - Always follow the instructions from manufacturer/FDA included with the test.
 - Wash your hands before and after you collect a nasal specimen for your test.
 - Many antigen test kits are beyond their original printed expiration date. Before you throw expired tests away, check [this website](#) to see if the expiration date has been extended.



TESTED NEGATIVE FOR COVID, BUT STILL HAVE SYMPTOMS?

- A single, negative antigen test result does not rule out infection. To best detect infection, a negative antigen test should be repeated at least 48 hours apart (known as serial testing). Sometimes a follow-up molecular test may be recommended to confirm an antigen test result.
- You may have another respiratory virus such as flu or RSV. Contact your doctor right away if you have symptoms of flu and are at higher risk for complications due to age or medical conditions or if you have trouble breathing or other signs of more severe illness. You should stay home until you have been fever free for 24 hours without using any medicine to lower fever such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil).

