

# Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)



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## Testing for COVID-19

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

Two kinds of tests are available for COVID-19: [viral tests](#) and [antibody tests](#).

- A viral test tells you if you have a current infection.
- An antibody test might tell you if you had a past infection. An antibody test might not show if you have a current infection because it can take 1–3 weeks after infection for your body to make antibodies. Having antibodies to the virus that causes COVID-19 might provide protection from getting infected with the virus again. If it does, we do not know how much protection the antibodies might provide or how long this protection might last.

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 tested for current COVID-19 infection

- To learn if you have a current infection, [viral tests](#) are used. 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. You can visit your [state](#) or [local](#)  health department's website to look for the latest local information on testing.
- If you have symptoms of COVID-19 and want to get tested, call your healthcare provider first.
- If you have symptoms of COVID-19 and are not tested, it is important to stay home. Learn [what to do if you are sick](#).

## Results

- If you test positive for COVID-19 by a viral test, know what protective steps to take [if you are sick or caring for someone](#).
- If you test negative for COVID-19 by a viral test, 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.

## More Information

[Healthcare Professionals](#)

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[Public Health](#)

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[Laboratorians](#)

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

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[CDC: COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions: Symptoms & Emergency Warning Signs](#)

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

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