

# Patient Education

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## **COVID-19 Tests**

You must carefully read the "Consumer Information Use and Disclaimer" below in order to understand and correctly use this information

### **Why is this procedure done?**

Coronavirus disease 2019 is also known as COVID-19. It is caused by a virus called SARS-associated coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2). Doctors may order tests to see if you are currently infected with COVID-19. They may also test to see if you had COVID-19 in the past.

It is important to understand the kind of test you get. Doctors use a viral test to find out if you are sick with COVID-19. Most often, this uses a nose or throat swab. A blood test is another kind of COVID-19 test to see if your body has made antibodies to the virus. If you have antibodies, this means you have had the virus in the past or have been vaccinated.

There are also self-tests or home tests for COVID-19. These can give you results very quickly.

### **What will the results be?**

#### **Viral Test (Nose or Throat Swab):**

- The doctor will look at the results of your test. The doctor may learn that you have signs of an illness. This illness can spread easily to others or you may have a greater risk of getting very sick.
- If the results are positive, it means you have an active infection. You may or may not have symptoms of the disease.
- If the results are negative, you are most likely not infected at the time of your test. The sample could have been collected too early in your infection. Your symptoms may be from some other kind of illness. This does not mean that you cannot get COVID-19. Your doctor may order another test if you continue to have signs of COVID-19.

#### **Blood Test (Antibody Test):**

- The doctor will look at the results of your test.
- If the results are positive, it means you were infected with COVID-19 at one time or you were vaccinated. You may be immune to the disease, but doctors do not know if you are protected from getting sick again or for how long.

- If the results are negative, it means your body has not made antibodies to COVID-19. Most often this means you have not had the infection. It could also mean that you have had the infection recently and your body has not had time to make antibodies.
- This test is useful to help public health officials track the disease. It is less helpful to tell if you have an active infection.

#### **Home Tests:**

- You will do the test yourself at home. Be sure to carefully follow all of the instructions for the test.
- If the results are positive, it means the test found the virus and you are likely to have an infection. You may or may not have symptoms of the disease.
- If the results are negative, it means the test did not find the virus. You may not have an infection and are at a low risk for spreading the disease to others. It is important to repeat the test within a few days to check again for infection. Wait at least 24 hours between tests.

#### **What happens before the procedure?**

- There are no special things to do before the test.
- Talk to your doctor about:
  - All the drugs you are taking
  - If you have any bleeding problems

#### **What happens during the procedure?**

It will only take a few minutes to have this test. You will be awake the whole time.

- **Viral test:** A staff member will insert a swab into your nose and move it around. Sometimes the staff will swab both sides of your nose or your throat. The staff may ask you to do this yourself. This may be uncomfortable but will last only a few seconds.
- **Blood test:** The staff will take a small amount of blood taken from you with a needle. You may have a little pain. The staff will take out the needle and put a bandage on your skin. Sometimes the staff will prick your finger and collect just a small amount of blood for the test.
- **Home test:** Some tests have you swab your nose and others have you swab your mouth or throat. Follow the directions on the test kit to know what you need to do.

#### **What happens after the procedure?**

- You may want to sit quietly for a few minutes before standing up. This will help keep you from feeling dizzy after the test.
- If you had a blood test, put pressure with your other hand where the needle was. This will help with bruising and bleeding.

- Ask your doctor when you will get the results. If you are doing a home test, you will often have results within 15 to 30 minutes.

**What care is needed at home?**

If you think you have COVID-19 or have been exposed to someone with it, stay away from others for at least 10 days.

**What follow-up care is needed?**

Your doctor may ask you to make visits to the office to check on your progress. Be sure to keep these visits.

**What problems could happen?**

- Pain
- Bruising
- Bleeding
- Feeling dizzy

**Where can I learn more?**

American Association for Clinical Chemistry

<https://labtestsonline.org/tests/coronavirus-covid-19-testing>

Centers for Disease Control

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/testing.html>

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**Consumer Information Use and Disclaimer:**

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