CDC Centers for Disease
Control and Prevention

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Testing for COVID-19

There are laboratory tests that can identify the virus that causes COVID-19 in respiratory specimens. State and local public health departments have received tests from CDC, whereas medical providers are getting tests developed by commercial manufacturers.

Self-Checker

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

How to decide if you should be tested or seek care

Not everyone needs to be tested for COVID-19. Here is some information that might help you make decisions about seeking medical care or testing.

- Most people have mild illness and are able to recover at home without medical care. They may not need to be tested.
- There is no treatment specifically approved for people who have COVID-19.

CDC has guidance for who should be tested, but **decisions about testing are at the discretion of state and local health departments and/or individual clinicians**.

- Clinicians should work with their state and local health departments to coordinate testing through public health laboratories, or work with clinical or commercial laboratories.

How to get tested

COVID-19 testing differs by location. If you have symptoms of COVID-19 and want to get tested, call your medical provider first. You can also visit your state or local ⧉ health department's website to look for the latest local information on testing. While supplies of these tests are increasing, it may still be difficult to find a place to get tested.

What to do after you are tested

- **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 specimen was collected. However, that does not mean you will not get sick. It is possible that you were very early in your infection when your specimen was collected and that you could test positive later. Or you could be exposed later and then develop illness. In other words, a negative test result does not rule out getting sick later.

Community transmission of COVID-19 is occurring in parts of the United States. In the coming months, most of the U.S. population will be exposed to this virus. You should continue to practice all the protective measures recommended to keep yourself and others from getting infected. See How to Protect Yourself.

Additional information: U.S. Food and Drug Adminstration FAQs on Diagnostic Testing for SARS-CoV-2 ⧉ .

If you are very sick, get medical attention immediately

When to Seek Medical Attention

If you develop any of these **emergency warning signs*** for COVID-19 get **medical attention immediately:**

- Trouble breathing

- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest

- New confusion or inability to arouse

- Bluish lips or face

*This list is not all inclusive. Please consult your medical provider for any other symptoms that are severe or concerning to you.

Call 911 if you have a medical emergency: Notify the operator that you have, or think you might have, COVID-19. If possible, put on a cloth face covering before medical help arrives.

For healthcare professionals

For information on testing for healthcare professionals, see recommendations for reporting, testing, and specimen collection at Interim Guidance for Healthcare Professionals.

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