



Self-Testing At Home or Anywhere

For doing rapid COVID-19 tests anywhere

Updated Sept. 6, 2022

CDC is reviewing this page to align with updated guidance.



What is a Self-Test or At-Home Test?

Self-tests for COVID-19 give rapid results and **can be taken anywhere**, regardless of your vaccination status or whether or not you have symptoms.

- They detect **current** infection and are sometimes also called “home tests,” “at-home tests,” or “over-the-counter (OTC) tests.”
- They give your **result in a few minutes** and are different from laboratory-based tests that may take days to return your result.
- Self-tests along with [vaccination](#), [wearing a well-fitted mask](#), and physical distancing, help [protect you and others](#) by reducing the chances of spreading COVID-19.
- Self-tests **do not** detect antibodies which would suggest a previous infection and they do not measure your level of immunity.



When To Take an At-Home COVID-19 Test


Test Yourself If...	Timing
You have any COVID-19 symptoms	Immediately
You were exposed to someone with COVID-19	At least 5 days after your exposure If you test negative for COVID-19, consider testing again 1 to 2 days after your first test
You are going to an indoor event or a gathering	Immediately before the gathering, or as close to the time of the event as possible This is especially important before gathering with individuals at risk of severe disease , older adults , those who are immunocompromised , or people who are not up to date on their COVID-19 vaccines , including children who cannot get vaccinated yet.

» Learn what to do if you [test positive](#) or [test negative](#).

- ▶ Watch Video: [When To Use a Self-Test \[00:04:04\]](#) | [Español \[00:04:53\]](#)
- ▶ Watch Video: [When To Use a Self-Test – ASL \[00:02:32\]](#)



How to Get an At-Home COVID-19 Test

- **Buy tests** online or in pharmacies and retail stores. Private health insurance may reimburse the cost of purchasing self-tests. Visit [FDA’s website](#)  for a list of authorized tests.
- Free tests may also be available through local health departments.
- If you’re not able to obtain a self-test when you need it, you might also **visit a community testing site, or call your local health department** for more options.

FDA-Authorized Tests



How to Use an At-Home COVID-19 Test

Read the complete manufacturer’s instructions for use before using the test.

- To use an at-home test, you will collect a nasal specimen and then test that specimen.
- If you do not follow the manufacturer’s instructions, your test result may be incorrect.
- Wash your hands before and after you collect a nasal specimen for your test.

- ▶ Watch Video: [How To Use a Self-Test \[00:03:08\]](#) | [Español \[00:04:02\]](#)
- ▶ Watch Video: [How To Use a Self-Test – ASL \[00:03:25\]](#)

Need More Information? Find [videos of manufacturer instructions](#) for your specific self-test.

What Your Test Results Mean



IF YOUR TEST IS Positive

- The test detected the virus and **you have an infection**.
- Stay home for at least 5 days and [isolate](#) from others in your home.
- Tell your [close contacts](#).
- Wear a [well-fitted mask](#) when around others. If available, a N95 or KN95 respirator is recommended.
- Watch for [symptoms](#). If you have any [emergency warning signs](#), seek emergency care immediately.
- Tell your healthcare provider. Contact them as soon as possible if:
 - Your symptoms get worse.
 - You are more likely to get very sick because you are an [older adult](#) or have an [underlying medical condition](#). Possible treatment may be available for you.

medical condition. Possible treatment may be available for you.

You have questions about your isolation.



IF YOUR TEST IS

Negative

- The test did not detect the virus, **but doesn't rule out an infection.**
- Some self-tests are designed to be used in a series (also known as serial testing). Consider repeating the test 24 to 48 hours later. Multiple negative tests increases the confidence that you are not infected with the virus that causes COVID-19.

If you think your test result may be incorrect, contact the test manufacturer for assistance, consider taking another at-home test, or contact a healthcare provider for help.

- ▶ **Watch Video:** [How To Interpret Self-Test Results \[00:04:15\]](#) | [Español \[00:05:17\]](#)
- ▶ **Watch Video:** [How To Interpret Self-Test Positive Results - ASL \[00:02:37\]](#)
- ▶ **Watch Video:** [How To Interpret Self-Test Negative Results - ASL \[00:03:00\]](#)

Need additional help? [CDC's Viral Testing Tool](#) is an online, mobile-friendly tool that asks a series of questions, and provides recommended actions and resources based on a user's responses.

Related Questions

Should I trust the results of a self-test?



Positive results from self-tests are highly reliable.

Negative results from self-tests do not rule out SARS-CoV-2 infection. A negative self-test result may not be reliable, especially if you have symptoms associated with COVID-19.

Invalid results from self-tests mean the test did not work properly, and a new test is needed to get an accurate result.

Do I need to report the results from my self-test?

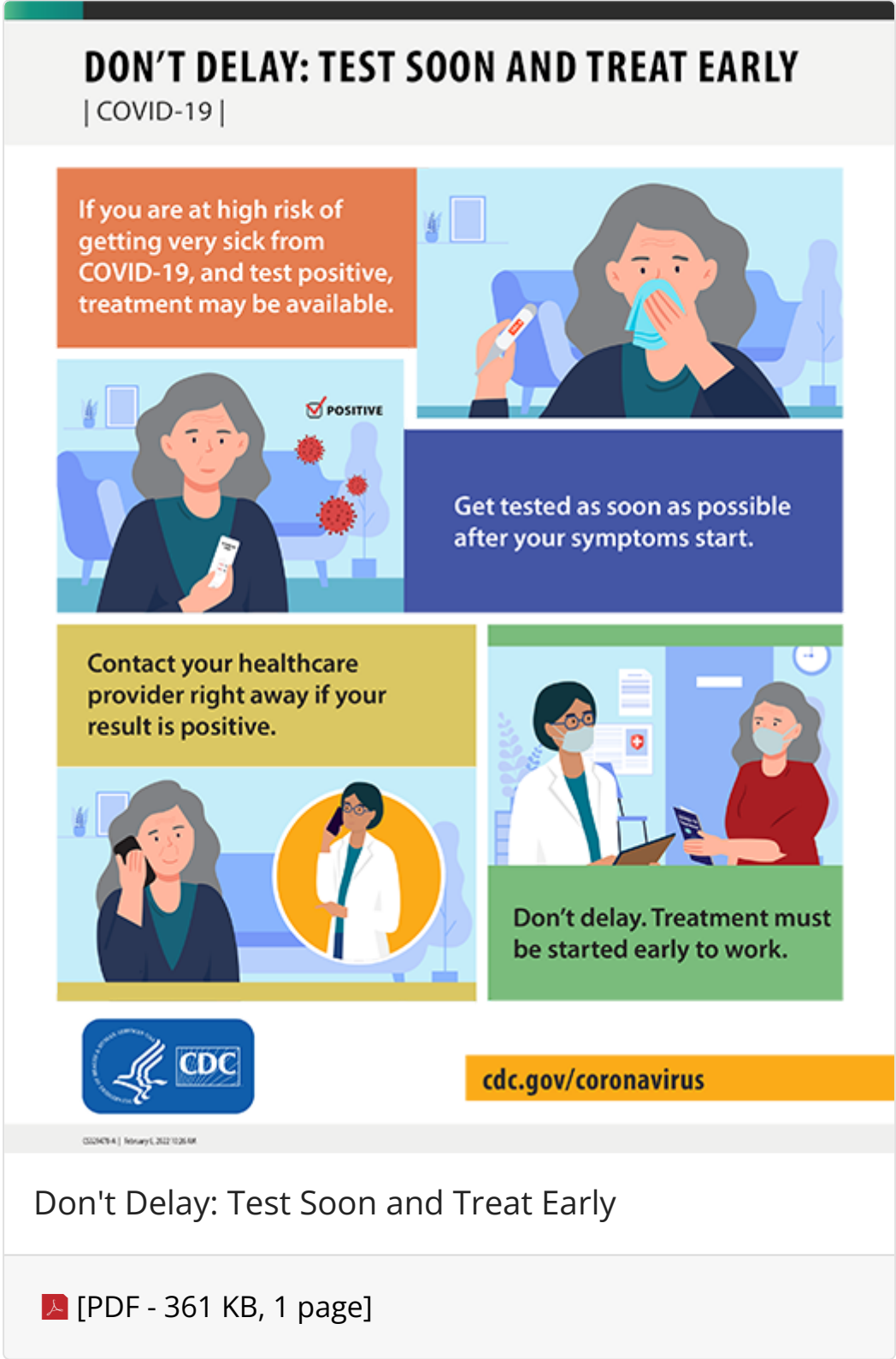


CDC strongly encourages everyone who uses a self-test to report any positive results to their healthcare provider. Healthcare providers can ensure that those who have tested positive for COVID-19 receive the most appropriate medical care, including specific treatments if necessary.

In most jurisdictions, healthcare providers who diagnose COVID-19 are required to report those cases to public health.

The US Government does not want to construct any barriers that would deter the use of self-tests. COVID-19 surveillance continues to be based on results from laboratory testing. The primary role of case reporting is to allow public health agencies to take actions to mitigate disease spread. The public health community, including CDC, is confident that situational awareness remains strong without receiving self-test results.

Print Resources



How to Collect an Anterior Nasal Swab Specimen for COVID-19 Testing



Use **only** an authorized specimen collection kit given to you by your healthcare provider or personnel at the testing center, or purchased over the counter in a pharmacy or other store. Follow the instructions included with the specimen collection kit which may be used on-site or at home. Use **only** materials provided in the kit to collect and store or mail the specimen, unless the kit says to do otherwise. These instructions can also be used with self-testing kits if the kit specifies anterior nasal swab collection.

Set-up

1. Disinfect the surface where you will open the collection kit. Remove and lay out contents of kit, i.e. instructions before starting specimen collection.

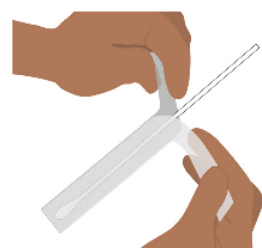


2. Wash hands with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer.

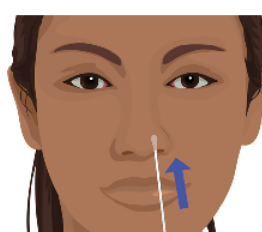


Specimen collection

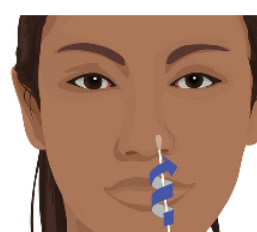
3. Remove the swab from the package. Do not touch the soft end with your hands or anything else.



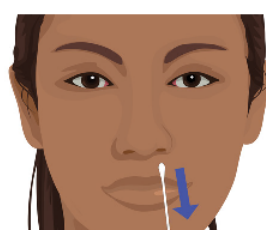
4. Insert the entire soft end of the swab into your nostril **no more than 3/4 of an inch** (1.5 cm) into your nose.



5. Slowly rotate the swab, gently pressing against the inside of your nostril at least 4 times for a total of 15 seconds. Get as much nasal discharge as possible on the soft end of the swab.



6. Gently remove the swab.



7. Using the same swab, repeat steps 4–6 in your other nostril with the same end of the swab.

[cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)

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How to Collect An Anterior Nasal Swab Specimen for COVID-19 Testing

[PDF - 372 KB, 2 pages]

How to Collect a Nasal Mid-Turbinate Specimen for COVID-19 Testing



Use **only** an authorized specimen collection kit. Get a kit from your healthcare provider or a testing center. Kits are available at a pharmacy or other retail outlet. Follow the instructions included with the specimen collection kit. Use **only** materials provided in the kit to collect and store or mail the specimen unless the kit says to do otherwise. Use these instructions with kits that specify a nasal mid-turbinate swab collection.

Setup

1. Disinfect the surface where you will open the collection kit. Remove and lay out contents of kit. Read instructions before starting specimen collection.



2. Wash hands with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer.



Specimen Collection

3. Remove the swab from the package. Do not touch the soft end with your hands or anything else.



4. Insert the entire soft end of the swab straight back into your nostril **less than one inch** (about 2cm) or until you feel resistance.



5. Slowly rotate the swab, gently rubbing it along the insides of your nasal passage several times.



How to Collect a Nasal Mid-Turbinate Swab Specimen for COVID-19 Testing

[PDF - 4 MB, 2 pages]



USING YOUR SELF-TEST | COVID-19 |

1 Follow instructions very carefully.



Use the QR code below for more information about self-testing and how-to videos.

2



3

If your results are positive
Isolate yourself from others. As much as possible, stay in a specific room and away from other people and pets in your home.

Tell your close contacts that they may have been exposed to COVID-19.



If you are at an **increased risk** of becoming severely ill, treatment maybe be available. Contact your health care provider right away if your test result is positive.

Name of provider


Phone number of provider



www.cdc.gov/covidtesting

CS 324605-M 02/08/22

Using Your Self-Test - customizable

 [PDF - 279 KB, 1 Page]

Helpful Links

FDA-Authorized At-Home Tests 

Talking to Close Contacts

Symptoms of COVID-19

Quarantine and Isolation

Underlying Medical Conditions

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