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URL of this page: <https://medlineplus.gov/covid19testing.html>

COVID-19 Testing

Also called: COVID-19 Antibody Test, COVID-19 Viral Test, SARS-CoV-2 Testing

COVID-19 [<https://medlineplus.gov/covid19coronavirusdisease2019.html>] (coronavirus disease 2019) is a disease caused by a virus called SARS-CoV-2. There are two types of tests for this virus:

- A **viral test** tells you if you have a current infection. Viral tests can either be rapid tests or laboratory tests:
 - **Rapid tests** [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/rapid-tests/>] can be done in minutes. They are often antigen tests, which look for specific proteins from the virus. Some rapid tests are self-tests which you can do at home.
 - Laboratory tests can take days to complete and include PCR tests [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/pcr-tests/>].
- An **antibody (serology) test** might tell you if you had a past infection.

If you need a COVID-19 test, you can:

- Buy a self-test online or at a store. Make sure that the test you buy has been authorized by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA).
- Check your state or local health department's website for information on testing in your area.
- Contact your health care provider.





Even if your COVID-19 viral test is negative (the test did not detect the virus), you should still take steps to protect yourself and others [<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>].

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention


Start Here

- COVID-19 Test Basics [<https://www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/covid-19-test-basics>] (Food and Drug Administration)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.fda.gov/consumers/articulos-para-el-consumidor-en-espanol/conceptos-basicos-de-las-pruebas-para-el-covid-19>]

Diagnosis and Tests

- Antibody Serology Tests [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/antibody-serology-tests/>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/pruebas-de-serologia-de-anticuerpos/>]
- At-Home Medical Tests [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/at-home-medical-tests/>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/pruebas-medicas-en-el-hogar/>]
- Directory of Local Health Departments [<https://www.naccho.org/membership/lhd-directory>]
(National Association of County and City Health Officials)
- PCR Tests [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/pcr-tests/>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/pruebas-de-pcr/>]
- Rapid Tests [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/rapid-tests/>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/pruebas-rapidas/>]
- Testing for COVID-19 [<https://www.cdc.gov/covid/testing/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)



Specifics

- At-Home OTC COVID-19 Diagnostic Tests [<https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/coronavirus-covid-19-and-medical-devices/home-otc-covid-19-diagnostic-tests>] (Food and Drug Administration)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/coronavirus-covid-19-and-medical-devices/pruebas-de-covid-19-sin-receta-medica-o-de-venta-libre-para-diagnostico-en-el-hogar>]
- COVID-19 Antibody Testing [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/covid-19-antibody-testing/about/pac-20489696?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/tests-procedures/covid-19-antibody-testing/about/pac-20489696?p=1>]
- How Do COVID-19 Antibody Tests Differ from Diagnostic Tests? [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/coronavirus/expert-answers/covid-antibody-tests/faq-20484429?p=1>]
(Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/diseases-conditions/coronavirus/expert-answers/covid-antibody-tests/faq-20484429?p=1>]
- How Do I Know if the Expiration Date of My At-Home COVID-19 Test Has Been Extended? [<https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/coronavirus-covid-19-and-medical-devices/home-covid-19-diagnostic-tests-frequently-asked-questions#updated-expiration>] (Food and Drug Administration)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/coronavirus-covid-19-and-medical-devices/pruebas-para-detectar-el-covid-19-para-uso-en-el-hogar-preguntas-frecuentes#updated-expiration>]
- Nasal Swab [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/nasal-swab/>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/hisopado-nasal/>]

Statistics and Research

- Rapid Acceleration of Diagnostics (RADx) [<https://www.nih.gov/research-training/medical-research-initiatives/radx>]  (National Institutes of Health)

Clinical Trials

- ClinicalTrials.gov: COVID-19 Antibody Test [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?intr=SARS-CoV-2+%28+antibody+OR+serology%29+test&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)
- ClinicalTrials.gov: COVID-19 Viral Test [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=COVID-19&intr=%28PCR+test%29+OR+%28antigen+test%29&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)

Journal Articles

References and abstracts from MEDLINE/PubMed (National Library of Medicine)

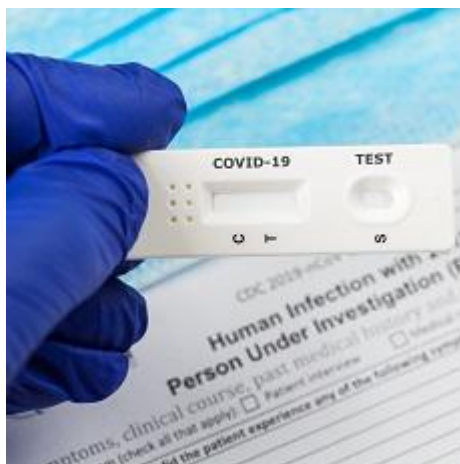
- Article: The Role of Testing and Vaccination in Mediating Social Vulnerability and... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40724047>]
- Article: Population-Based Digital Health Interventions to Deliver at-Home COVID-19 Testing: SCALE-UP II... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40720824>]
- Article: COVID-19 Predeparture Test Results and Vaccination Coverage among US-Bound Refugees, 2020-2022. [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40705398>]
- COVID-19 Testing -- see more articles [<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=%22COVID-19+Testing%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+AND+humans%5Bmh%5D+AND+english%5Bla%5D+AND+%22last+1+Year%22+%5Bedat%5D+NOT+%28letter%5Bpt%5D+OR+case+reports%5Bpt%5D+OR+editorial%5Bpt%5D+OR+comment%5Bpt%5D%29+AND+free+full+text%5Bsb%5D+>]

Children

- COVID-19: Getting Tested [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/coronavirus-tests.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/coronavirus-tests.html>]
- COVID-19: Viral Testing (For Parents) [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/coronavirus-viral-testing.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/coronavirus-viral-testing.html>]

Patient Handouts

- Self-testing for COVID-19 [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000986.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/patientinstructions/000986.htm>]



MEDICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

COVID-19 antibody test [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007773.htm>]

COVID-19 virus test [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007769.htm>]

Self-testing for COVID-19 [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000986.htm>]

Related Health Topics

COVID-19 (Coronavirus Disease 2019) [<https://medlineplus.gov/covid19coronavirusdisease2019.html>]

COVID-19 Vaccines [<https://medlineplus.gov/covid19vaccines.html>]

Post-COVID Conditions (Long COVID) [<https://medlineplus.gov/postcovidconditionslongcovid.html>]

National Institutes of Health

The primary NIH organization for research on *COVID-19 Testing* is the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases [<http://www.niaid.nih.gov/>]

Other Languages

Find health information in languages other than English [<https://medlineplus.gov/languages/covid19testing.html>] on *COVID-19 Testing*

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