HOW ARE COVID-19 CASES TRACKED AND REPORTED?

Reporting of COVID-19 cases through the Wisconsin Electronic Disease Surveillance System (WEDSS) is a partnership between laboratories, healthcare providers, and public health agencies across Wisconsin. The full process, from when a specimen is collected to data being published on the DHS website, generally takes several days to complete. Healthcare and public health partners are working to complete the testing and reporting process as quickly as possible to prevent further exposures and reduce the burden of COVID-19 in Wisconsin.

The specimen is sent to a laboratory and tested to see if the person has COVID-19.

Positive results are reviewed by public health and imported into WEDSS. Negative results are automatically processed into WEDSS.

Public health routinely performs quality checks on data to improve accuracy.

A person who has symptoms of COVID-19 or a known exposure can be tested by their healthcare provider or by going to a community testing site.

The laboratory reports the test result to public health by sending an electronic report to WEDSS.

Public health identifies cases as confirmed or probable based on their test result. Case interviews and contact tracing begins.

Summary data on COVID-19 are published on the DHS website, and updated on a routine basis.

What does my lab result mean?
Molecular tests such as PCR detect the genetic material of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. If you have a positive PCR test, you are a confirmed case.
Antigen tests detect proteins on the surface of the SARS-CoV-2 virus. If you have a positive antigen test, you are a probable case of COVID-19. Some people who are probable cases will be asked to take a second test to confirm their diagnosis.