

COVID-19 TESTING WHAT TO KNOW

Test results are most accurate in people with symptoms or close contacts of positive cases.

Where is the test processed?	Laboratory: If your test is processed by a lab, the test result is likely very accurate. This is because they process the tests using sensitive, technical methods in a highly regulated environment. Tests processed by labs tend to be more time-intensive and expensive.
	Point-of-Care (POC): If your test is a rapid test performed close to where you are swabbed, it may not be as accurate. This can be because of lower sensitivity of rapid technology. Less accurate tests may require a second test to make sure the results are trustworthy (for example, if a person without symptoms comes back positive).

	Molecular Test	Antigen Test	Antibody Test
What does the test show?	Active COVID-19 infection	Active COVID-19 infection	Past COVID-19 infection
Other names for the test?	Diagnostic test, RT-PCR or PCR Test, nucleic acid amplification test (NAAT), viral test, LAMP test	Rapid diagnostic test, paper test, lateral flow test	Serological test, blood test, serology test
How is the sample taken?	Swabbing the nose or throat; or collecting saliva	Swabbing the nose	Drawing blood
How long do results take?	It depends on the test location. It ranges from 5 minutes up to a week, but on average, results take 48 hours.	Less than an hour	It depends on the test location. It can be 1-3 days or less than an hour.
What are the limitations?	Some testing can be slow and expensive	Reduced accuracy may lead to false results	Can't diagnose current infection or infer immunity to COVID-19
Is another test needed?	Usually not, but some POC tests may benefit from a second test for positive cases with no symptoms and negative cases with symptoms	Often, particularly for positive cases with no symptoms and negative cases with symptoms. Follow this infographic for more details.	Usually not

