

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Testing for COVID-19



Coronavirus Self-Checker

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

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 while medical providers are getting tests developed by commercial manufacturers. All of these tests are Real-Time Reverse Transcriptase (RT)-PCR Diagnostic Panels, that can provide results in 4 to 6 hours.

Who should be tested

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

- Most people have [mild illness](#) and are able to [recover at home](#).
- There is no treatment specifically approved for this virus.
- Testing results may be helpful to inform decision-making about who you come in contact with.

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

If you have symptoms of COVID-19 and want to get tested, try calling your state or local health department or a medical provider. 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, see [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 at the time of your specimen collection 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.

CDC [expects that widespread transmission of COVID-19](#) in the United States will occur. 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 free from illness. See [How to Protect Yourself](#).

Additional information: U.S. Food and Drug Administration [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 **emergency warning signs** for COVID-19 get **medical attention immediately**. Emergency warning signs include*:

- 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.

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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