

Different Types of Coronavirus Tests



Molecular Test



Antigen Test



Antibody Test

Also known as...

Diagnostic test, viral test, molecular test, nucleic acid amplification test (NAAT), RT-PCR test, LAMP test

Diagnostic test

Serological test, serology, blood test, serology test

How the sample is taken...

Nasopharyngeal (the part of the throat behind the nose), nasal or throat swab (most tests) or saliva (a few tests)

Nasal or nasopharyngeal swab (most tests)

Finger stick or blood draw

How long it takes to get results...

1-5 days

Some may be very fast (15 - 30 minutes), depending on the test.

Same day (many locations)

Is another test needed...

This test is typically highly accurate and usually does not need to be repeated.

Positive results are usually highly accurate, but false positives can happen, especially in areas where very few people have the virus. Negative results may need to be confirmed with a molecular test.

Sometimes a second antibody test is needed for accurate results.

What it shows...

Diagnoses active coronavirus infection

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Can show if you've been infected by coronavirus in the past

What it can't do...

Show if you ever had COVID-19 or were infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 in the past

Antigen tests are more likely to miss an active COVID-19 infection compared to molecular tests. Your health care provider may order a molecular test if your antigen test shows a negative result but you have symptoms of COVID-19.

Diagnose COVID-19 at the time of the test or show that you do not have COVID-19

Will this test prevent me from being quarantined?

If you have a positive molecular test and are exposed within 90 days of the first day of your symptoms, you may not have to quarantine if you are exposed again in the next 90 days.

Anyone who has tested positive through a PCR OR antigen test (antigen positive AND has symptoms) does NOT need to quarantine during the next 90 days if exposure to a case occurs. IF the person develops symptoms after the exposure, then they must quarantine and seek medical advice from their PCP to determine if they are reinfected.

No.