# Test for Current Infection (Viral Test)

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https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/testing/diagnostic-testing.html

## Who should get tested

• People who have symptoms of COVID-19

• People who have had close contact (within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes) with someone with confirmed COVID-19

• People who have taken part in activities that put them at higher risk for COVID-19 because they cannot socially distance as needed, such as travel, attending large social or mass gatherings, or being in crowded indoor settings.

• People who have been asked or referred to get testing by their healthcare provider, [local](https://www.naccho.org/membership/lhd-directory) or [state](https://www.cdc.gov/publichealthgateway/healthdirectories/healthdepartments.html) health department.

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If you do get tested or take an at-home test because you have COVID-19 symptoms or have had a close contact with someone who has it, you should self-quarantine at home pending test results and follow the advice of your healthcare provider or a public health professional.

## Viral tests are used to look for current infection

A viral test checks specimens from your nose or your mouth (saliva) to find out if you are currently infected with SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. Two types of viral tests can be used:

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**• Nucleic acid amplification tests (NAATs)** detect the virus’s genetic material and are commonly used in laboratories. NAATs are generally more accurate, but sometimes take longer to process than other test types.

**• Antigen tests** detect viral proteins and are generally not as sensitive as NAATs, particularly if the antigen test is used on someone without COVID-19 symptoms. If you have a positive or negative antigen test, your healthcare provider may need to confirm the test result with a NAAT.

## How to get a viral test

You can visit your state or local health department’s website to look for the latest local information on testing.

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• If you have symptoms of COVID-19 and want to get tested, call your healthcare provider first.

• If you have symptoms of COVID-19 and are not tested, it is important to stay home. Find out what to do if you are sick.

• Both types of viral tests are available for at-home use.

## What to do after a viral test

**• If you test positive for COVID-19**, know what protective steps to take [if you are sick](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/index.html).

\_ Most people have mild COVID-19 illness and can recover at home without medical care. Contact your healthcare provider if your symptoms are getting worse or if you have questions about your health.

**• If you test negative for COVID-19**, you probably were not infected at the time your sample was collected. This does not mean you will not get sick:

\_ A negative test result only means that you did not have COVID-19 at the time of testing or that your sample was collected too early in your infection.

\_ You could also be exposed to COVID-19 after the test and then get infected and spread the virus to others.

\_ If you have symptoms later, you may need another test to determine if you are infected with the virus that causes COVID-19.

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To get your test result, please check with the group that performed your test, such as your healthcare provider or health department. How long it will take to get your test results depends on the test used. If you used an at-home test, follow the guidance above.

## Take steps to protect yourself

Whether you test positive or negative for COVID-19, you should take preventive measures to protect yourself and others.

Content source: National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases (NCIRD), Division of Viral Diseases