# COVID-19 Testing Guidance

When to Get Tested for COVID-19

- If you have symptoms, test immediately.
- If you were exposed to COVID-19 and do not have symptoms, wait at least 5 full days after your exposure before testing. If you test too early, you may be more likely to get an inaccurate result.
- If you are in certain high-risk settings, you may need to test as part of a screening testing program.
- Consider testing before contact with someone at high risk for severe COVID-19.
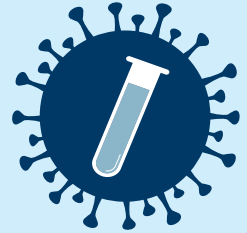
Most Common Types of Tests

Laboratory tests, such as PCR tests, are very accurate because they detect viral genetic material. They usually provide results in 2–3 days.

At-home antigen tests are less accurate, especially for people without symptoms and early in an infection, because they detect your body's response to the virus. They usually provide results in 15–30 minutes.

A single, negative antigen test result does not rule out infection. To best detect infection, a negative antigen test should be repeated at least 48 hours later (known as serial testing). Sometimes a follow-up laboratory test is recommended to confirm an antigen test result.

Test Results

If your test result is postitive:

Any positive COVID-19 test means you have an infection.

- Isolate for 5 days.
- Tell people you had recent contact with that they may have been exposed.
- Monitor your symptoms. If you have any emergency warning signs, seek emergency care immediately.
- Contact a healthcare provider to see if treatment is available for you.

When can isolation end?

- You may end isolation after day 5 if:
  - You have no symptoms after day 5
  - You have been fever-free for 24hrs without fever-reducing medication

Continue wearing a mask through day 10 or test negative with two antigen tests, 48hrs apart

If your test result is negative:

Laboratory negative test result:

- If you tested negative 5 days after exposure, you do not have COVID-19
- If you do not have symptoms and you have not been exposed to the virus that causes COVID-19, you may return to normal activities. Continue to take steps to protect yourself and others, including monitoring for symptoms. Get tested again if symptoms appear.

At-home antigen negative test result:

- A negative COVID-19 test means the test did not detect the SARS-CoV-2 virus at the time of that test.
- If you do not have symptoms, but were exposed to the virus that causes COVID-19 and you used an antigen test:
  - Test again 48 hours after the first negative test.
  - If your second antigen test is negative, test a third time 48 hours after the second negative test.
- If you have symptoms and you used an antigen test:
  - Test again 48 hours after the first negative test, for a total of at least two tests.
  - If your second antigen test is negative, test a third time 48 hours after the second negative test.
  - Consider getting a laboratory test, or contact your healthcare provider if you have questions or if your symptoms worsen.

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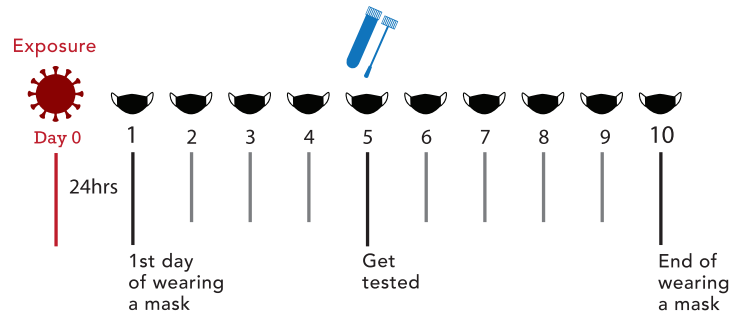HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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COVID-19 Quarantine Guidance

If you were exposed to the virus that causes COVID-19 or have been told by a healthcare provider or public health authority that you were exposed, here are the steps that you should take, regardless of your vaccination status or if you have had a previous infection.

After being exposed to COVID-19:
Start precautions immediately

- If you were exposed to COVID-19, you are recommended to wear a high-quality mask or respirator for 10 days and get tested on day 5.
- Start counting from Day 1 (Day 0 is the day of your last exposure to someone with COVID-19).
- Continue precautions for 10 full days; you can still develop COVID-19 up to 10 days after you have been exposed.
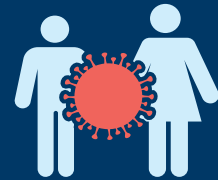
Exposure

Day 0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

24hrs

1st day of wearing a mask

Get tested

End of wearing a mask

Precautions

Wear a high-quality mask or respirator (e.g., N95) any time you are around others inside your home or indoors in public*

Do not go places where you are unable to wear a mask, including travel and public transportation settings.

Take extra precautions if you will be around people who are more likely to get very sick from COVID-19.

*Masks are not recommended for children under ages 2 years and younger, or for people with some disabilities. Other prevention actions (such as improving ventilation) should be used to avoid transmission during these 10 days.

Watch for symptoms

- fever (100.4°F or greater)
- cough
- shortness of breath
- other COVID-19 symptoms

If you develop symptoms:

- isolate immediately
- get tested
- stay home until you know the result
- If your test result is positive, follow isolation recommendations

Get tested on Day 6

Get tested at least 5 full days after your last exposure. Test even if you don't develop symptoms.

If you test positive:

- Isolate immediately

If you test negative:

- Continue taking precautions through day 10
- Wear a high-quality mask when around others at home and indoors in public
- You can still develop COVID-19 up to 10 days after you have been exposed.
- If using an antigen test, follow testing guidance.

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COVID-19 Isolation Guidance

When should I isolate?

Regardless of vaccination status, you should isolate from others when you test positive for COVID-19. You should also isolate if you are sick and suspect that you have COVID-19 but do not yet have test results.

When you have COVID-19, isolation is counted in days, as follows:

If you had no symptoms:

- Day 0 is the day you were tested (not the day you received your positive test result)
- Day 1 is the first full day following the day you were tested
- If you develop symptoms within 10 days of when you were tested, consult your healthcare provider

If you had symptoms:

- Day 0 of isolation is the day symptoms began, regardless of when you tested positive
- Day 1 is the first full day after the day your symptoms started

How do I isolate?

If you test positive for COVID-19, stay home for at least 5 days and isolate from others in your home. You are likely most infectious during these first 5 days.

- Do not travel.
- Stay home and separate from others as much as possible.
- Use a separate bathroom, if possible.
- Take steps to improve ventilation at home, if possible.
- Don't share personal household items, like cups, towels, and utensils.
- Monitor your symptoms. If you have an emergency warning sign (like trouble breathing), seek emergency medical care immediately.
- Wear a high-quality mask if you must be around others at home and in public.
- Do not go places where you are unable to wear a mask.

When can I end isolation?

End isolation based on how serious your COVID-19 symptoms were.

If you have no symptoms:

- You may end isolation after day 5 and continue to wear a high quality mask or respirator through day 10.

If you had symptoms:

- You may end isolation after day 5 and continue to wear a high quality mask or respirator through day 10 if:
  - You are fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medication)
  - Your symptoms are improving
- If you still have fever or your other symptoms have not improved, continue to isolate until they improve.
- If you had moderate illness (if you experienced shortness of breath or had difficulty breathing), or severe illness (you were hospitalized) due to COVID-19, or you have a weakened immune system, you need to isolate through day 10.
- If you had severe illness or have a weakened immune system, consult your doctor before ending isolation. Ending isolation without a viral test may not be an option for you.
- If you are unsure if your symptoms are moderate or severe or if you have a weakened immune system, talk to a healthcare provider for further guidance.

When can I stop wearing a mask?

After you have ended isolation, when you are feeling better (no fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and symptoms improving):

- Wear your mask through day 10.

OR

- If you have access to antigen tests, you can use them after day 5. With two negative tests in a row 48 hours apart, you may remove your mask sooner than day 10 (but no sooner than day 6).

Note: If your antigen test results are positive, you may still be infectious. You should continue wearing a mask and wait at least 48 hours before taking another test. Continue taking antigen tests at least 48 hours apart until you have two negative results in a row. This may mean you need to continue wearing a mask and testing beyond day 10.

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