

Get tested. Get treatment information.*

Use this guide to learn about COVID-19 testing



Actor portrayal.

For more information on testing, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [here](#).

***For those who have tested positive for COVID-19 and are at high risk for severe disease, treatments may be available but need to be started within 5 days of symptom onset. So, it's important to act fast and talk to your healthcare professional at the first sign of symptoms. [Learn more here](#).**





Why get tested for COVID-19?

COVID-19 is still a threat, so it's important for your health to stay informed and test when appropriate.

1. If you are at high risk for severe disease, the sooner you confirm it's COVID-19, the sooner you may be able to start an oral treatment. High-risk factors for progression to severe COVID-19 include, but are not limited to:

- Age 50 years or older
- Cancer
- Chronic lung diseases
- Diabetes
- Smoking
- Heart conditions
- Obesity and being overweight

2. The virus multiplies quickly in your body, and you may infect others without realizing it. Testing may help reduce the spread of COVID-19. If you develop symptoms or had a recent exposure, test for COVID-19.

If you are at high risk for severe disease, treatments for COVID-19 are available, but need to be started within 5 days of symptom onset. So, it's important to act fast and talk to your healthcare professional at the first sign of symptoms. [Learn more here.](#)



When should you get tested for COVID-19?

If you experience any of the following symptoms, get tested immediately:

- Cough, headache, fever, or chills
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Muscle or body aches
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat, congestion, or runny nose
- Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea

This list does not include all possible symptoms.

If you have been exposed to someone who tested positive for COVID-19, but do not have any symptoms, wait 5 days, then get tested.

- If you use a home test and it is negative, take another home test after 48 hours or take a PCR test as soon as you can
- If your second home test is also negative, wait another 48 hours and test a third time



How and where do you get tested?

There are 2 common types of COVID-19 tests:

- Antigen tests and
- Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) tests

You can test for COVID-19 in many settings, including:

In your home with antigen tests, or molecular tests (nucleic acid amplification technology)



At your preferred healthcare location, like your doctor's office, urgent care center, or pharmacy



At a clinical testing lab



Antigen tests: Testing in the comfort of your home

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), [antigen tests, or self tests](#), are rapid tests that usually produce results in 15–30 minutes. These tests are less likely to detect the virus than a PCR test. To rule out an infection, the CDC recommends you repeat testing if you receive a negative result. You can buy online or in pharmacies and retail stores. Private health insurance may reimburse the cost of purchasing self tests. Visit the [FDA's website](#) for a list of authorized tests.

- Follow the instructions that come with the kit carefully to collect your sample and insert it into the testing device

PCR: Testing with a healthcare professional

PCR tests are considered the “gold standard” for COVID-19 tests. PCR tests are usually administered by a healthcare professional and may be provided at low cost or no cost, including for people without insurance. Free PCR or rapid antigen tests may also be available through your local health department. Talk to a doctor or healthcare professional about other testing options that may be available to you. If you are a person with a disability, the [Disability Information and Access Line](#) can help you access a test or find a test location.

If you are at high risk for severe disease, treatments for COVID-19 are available, but need to be started within 5 days of symptom onset. So, it's important to act fast and talk to your healthcare professional at the first sign of symptoms. [Learn more here.](#)



Tested positive for COVID-19?

You can do something about it.

In the event you test positive for COVID-19, you should act fast:

- Isolate yourself to avoid spreading the virus, and contact your healthcare professional about your condition to understand if you are eligible for available treatment options
 - *If you do not have a doctor or yours is not available, consider visiting a [Test to Treat location](#), a telehealth provider, or your local pharmacy to learn more about treatment options*
- Clean and disinfect surfaces regularly, wash your hands, and ventilate your space for fresh air

For more information, visit:

[CDC About COVID-19](#)

[CDC: COVID-19 Testing: What You Need to Know](#)

[IDSA Guidelines on the Diagnosis of COVID-19](#)

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