

Frequently Asked Questions: COVID-19 Diagnostic and Antibody Testing

What types of tests are available for COVID-19?

There are three types of tests available for COVID-19:

1. A molecular (e.g. PCR) test is a diagnostic test that looks for a current COVID-19 infection. This is the most sensitive kind of test that looks for active infection.
2. An antigen test is a diagnostic test that looks for a current COVID-19 infection.
3. An antibody/serology test looks for past/resolved Covid-19 infection. It should not be used to diagnose an active infection.

Should I get a diagnostic (molecular/PCR or antigen) test?

If you have any symptoms or are working in person, get a **diagnostic test** to check for current infection.

Can I get a diagnostic test without symptoms?

Yes. But remember a negative diagnostic test only means you were not infected on the day of the test. Continue to practice prevention measures to protect yourself and others.

What happens if I test positive for COVID-19 with a diagnostic test?

If you test positive for COVID-19, stay home except to get medical care, and stay away from household members by using a separate room and bathroom if possible. You should do this for 10 days since symptoms first appeared, with at least 24 hours with no fever (without using fever reducing medications) and improved symptoms. If you have a positive test but you never had symptoms, you should isolate the same way for 10 days after your test was taken. You should also take these steps even before receiving your tests results, especially if you have any symptoms or had known exposure to COVID-19.

If you test positive, Health Department staff will also be in touch with you to provide guidance, conduct contact tracing, and connect you with needed resources during isolation.

Should I get an antibody test?

Washtenaw County Health Department **DOES NOT** recommend antibody testing at this time. If you do get an antibody test, we strongly recommend both an antibody test and a diagnostic test.

What happens if I test positive for antibodies?

There are currently many unknowns regarding COVID-19 antibody testing. Accuracy is not consistent among all available tests. We are unsure if it tells us anything about current or future immunity to COVID-19. Antibody tests should not be used to make individual health decisions, such as returning to work. We don't know if a positive antibody test means you are immune to future COVID-19 infection. Do not assume a positive antibody result means you're immune to COVID-19. Please continue to protect yourself and others with social distancing, face coverings, handwashing and other prevention measures.

Where can I get tested?

In Washtenaw County, most testing sites are using diagnostic tests and a small number are also offering antibody testing. Check with your health care provider or see www.washtenaw.org/COVID19test for testing locations across the county.

More information

- Local information: www.washtenaw.org/COVID19
- State information: www.Michigan.gov/coronavirus
- National information: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus
- Understanding your test results: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Testing-Guidance.pdf>
- CDC testing page: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/testing/index.html>