

Coronavirus Disease 2019 Testing Basics

	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) Saliva (a few tests)	Nasal or nasopharyngeal swab (most tests)	Finger stick or blood draw
How long it takes to get results...	Same day (some locations) or up to a week (longer in some locations with many tests)	Some may be very fast (15 – 30 minutes), depending on the test	Same day (many locations) or 1-3 days
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	Diagnoses active coronavirus infection	Shows 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.