

# Get the Facts: COVID-19 Testing

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Testing is critical to reducing and containing the spread of COVID-19. Knowing if you have the virus or not helps you make decisions to protect yourself and your loved ones.

## TYPES OF TESTS

**Viral tests** evaluate whether the virus is present in a respiratory sample and are used to diagnose current infection. Results from these tests help identify and isolate people who are infected in order to minimize transmission.

**Antibody tests** are used to detect past infection and are not recommended for diagnosing current infection. Depending on when someone was infected and the timing of the test, the test may not find antibodies in someone with a current COVID-19 infection. In addition, it is not currently proven whether a positive antibody test indicates protection against future infection; therefore, antibody tests should not be used at this time to determine if someone is immune.

## WHO SHOULD BE TESTED

- Anyone with [symptoms](#) of COVID-19
- Anyone who has been in [contact](#) with someone with COVID-19 or related symptoms
- Anyone who has been in a high-risk group setting like a large gathering or crowded space
- Anyone who has recently traveled to a [high-risk area](#)

## WHEN TO GET TESTED

- **If you have symptoms**, get tested right away. Make an appointment in advance and make sure to stay 6ft from others and wear a face mask.
- **If you don't have symptoms**, get tested 5-9 days after your last contact with the sick person. Remember to monitor your symptoms, maintain physical distance from others, and wear a mask.

## WAYS TO GET TESTED

Use the City of Chicago's [interactive testing map](#) to find a testing site near you. The map is being updated frequently and locations are continuously being added. All residents who want a test should first call their primary care provider or healthcare center to get a test. If you do not have this care of cannot access through your provider, testing is offered by the City of Chicago

- **Your health care provider:** Residents are best served when they're tested by their health care provider, because your health care provider is familiar with your medical history and can provide counselling that helps you understand exactly what your test result means.
- **Community health centers:** If you don't have a health care provider or medical insurance, there are approximately 165 community health centers throughout Chicago, so find one that is close to you at [findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov](https://findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov).
- **City of Chicago testing sites:** Alternatively, you can visit one of the City's [community-based testing sites](#). All tests at the City testing sites are available and free to all people regardless of citizenship or insurance status.

## CITY OF CHICAGO TESTING SITES

The City of Chicago, in partnership with Community Organized Relief Effort (CORE), is providing COVID-19 testing in community testing at no cost to residents. The City's community-based testing program is designed to supplement testing performed in clinical settings and aims to expand COVID-19 testing in communities with the greatest need and to respond to outbreaks in specific areas. To see the full list of community-based testing sites, please visit [chi.gov/covidtesting](https://chi.gov/covidtesting).

**All Chicago community-based testing is available and free to all residents, regardless of immigration status or insurance coverage.**

[Pre-registration](#) is recommended for City of Chicago testing sites.

Beginning in mid-to-late September, during the pre-registration process you may be asked to upload your insurance card or state identification card. **The ability to provide this information in no way affects your access to a COVID-19 test.** Information provided is strictly used for CDPH insurance and federal government reimbursement purposes only. If you're not able to upload your information during the pre-registration process, please bring it to your scheduled appointment. If you are uninsured or do not have a state identification card, you can still receive a free COVID-19 test.

### Who pays for COVID-19 tests?

- If you have health insurance, your insurance carrier will be billed for the cost of the test. **By law, the insurance company may not charge you any co-pay, deductible, or any out-of-pocket expense for the test.**
- If you do not have health insurance, the federal government will cover the cost of your test if you upload identification.
- If you do not upload insurance information or identification, the City of Chicago will pay for your test.

## RESULTS

**While waiting for test results**, if you have symptoms, have been in contact with someone with COVID-19, travelled to a high-risk area or been in large gatherings or crowded places, you should stay home and avoid contact with others.

**If you test positive for COVID-19**, you most likely DO currently have an active COVID-19 infection and can give the virus to others. Stay home for 10 days after your symptoms first appeared and at least 24 hours with no fever (without using fever-reducing medications) and improved symptoms, whichever is longer.

**If you test negative for COVID-19**, you most likely DO NOT currently have an active COVID-19 infection. However, even with a negative test result, if you have been in contact with someone with COVID-19, been in a high-risk group setting, or traveled to a high-risk area, you must self-quarantine for 14 days. Stay home, check your temperature twice a day and watch for symptoms of COVID-19.

## HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF AND OTHERS

While getting tested for COVID-19 is critical for stopping the spread of disease, it is just one element. To protect yourself and others from COVID-19, you should:

- **Stay home if you're sick** (except to get medical care) for 10 days since your symptoms first appeared and at least 24 hours with no fever and improved symptoms, whichever is longer.
- **Stay away from others (quarantine) for 14 days** if you have been in contact with someone with COVID-19, been in a high-risk group setting, or traveled to a high-risk area
- **Wash your hands often** with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- **Avoid close contact** with people who are sick
- **Put 6ft of distance** between yourself and people who don't live in your household
- **Wear a face covering** when in public and around others
- **Clean and disinfect** frequently touched surfaces, like doorknobs, light switches, phones, and faucets, every day
- **Monitor your health daily** and watch for symptoms of COVID-19
- **Avoid large gatherings and crowded spaces**