



## At-Home Tests for COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

### How do at-home tests work?

Home tests allow you to collect a sample at home, either from your nose or from saliva, to be tested for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. With most tests, the sample you collect must be sent to a lab for testing, and the testing company will let you know if your test is positive or negative. With a few test kits, you can perform the test yourself and get the result right away. The CDC has [information on at-home testing](#).

There are two types of at-home tests: **molecular tests** (e.g. PCR) and **antigen tests**. Molecular tests are very sensitive, so they may detect infections earlier and false negative results are rare. However, this type of test also may remain positive for some time after a person is no longer contagious. Antigen tests are less sensitive and might miss some infections. But, someone with a positive antigen test is likely to be contagious, especially if they have symptoms.

### How do I get an at-home test?

There are many companies that manufacture at-home tests. You can ask your health care provider to recommend one or you can visit the following Food and Drug Administration (FDA) web pages: [Molecular Diagnostic Tests for SARS-CoV-2](#) and [Antigen Diagnostic Tests for SARS-CoV-2](#). Then, type “home collection” or “home test” into the search box. Only tests that have been authorized by the FDA are on this list. If you use a test that is not on this list, your results may not be accurate.

*A few tests can now be purchased at pharmacies without a prescription, but many must be ordered online. For these, go to the website for your preferred testing company and answer the list of screening questions. If your symptoms are considered severe, you will be directed to contact your doctor. Depending on the company, you may need to wait for a healthcare provider to review your answers to the screening questions before you can purchase a test. Some at-home tests allow you to answer screening questions on behalf of your child. Once you pay for the test online, it will be shipped to you. Different testing companies have different shipping times.*

### How do I collect the sample?

Different tests require different collection methods, and each test comes with instructions for collecting your sample. For some, you will collect a sample from your nose and others from your saliva. The CDC has [guidance on collecting samples](#). Some of these kits direct you to web-based instructional videos for you to watch, and some require that a healthcare provider observe you collect the sample via video chat.

### Do I need to ship my sample to a lab?

Not always. A few kits give you the result at home. Most kits come with instructions about how to ship the sample back using a pre-paid shipping label and provided packaging. Typically, you must ship the sample back on the same day you collect it, and some labs don't receive deliveries on weekends. Once you prepare your sample to be shipped to the lab, you'll need to take it to the drop-off location given in the instructions, such as a FedEx drop box.

### How will I get my test result?

A few at-home kits will give you the results at home, usually within 30 minutes. For the samples that you send to the lab, the testing company will tell you how long it will take to get your result. You may have the opportunity to speak to someone on the phone or by video chat about your result. If you sent your sample to the lab and your test result is positive, someone at the testing company may tell you what to do next. By law, your result will be reported to your local health department, who will attempt to contact you if your test result is positive.

### What should I do if my test result is positive?

- If you used an **antigen** test, you MAY need to confirm your test result with a PCR test. Contact your healthcare provider to find out more.
- Stay home until you meet **all three** conditions below (or see [instructions for isolation](#)), *even if you are fully vaccinated*:
  - 1) At least 10 days have passed since your symptoms began or, if you never had symptoms, 10 days have passed since you collected the sample that tested positive; AND
  - 2) At least 24 hours have passed since you stopped having a fever without using fever-reducing medications; AND
  - 3) Other symptoms have improved.
- Share these [quarantine instructions](#) with any [close contacts](#).