

COVID-19 guidance

Saginaw County



HEALTH DEPARTMENT

COVID-19 TESTING PRIMER

When you walk into or drive thru a COVID-19 testing site, do you know which kind of test you're getting and what it tells you? **Make sure you ASK the testing location!**

To find a testing site near you, call 211 or visit michigan.gov/coronavirus

PCR Test

Gives YES or NO answer to "do you have COVID-19"

The polymerase chain reaction (PCR) or "swab" test is the gold standard for COVID-19 testing.

- Nasopharyngeal, oral, mid nasal, or saliva swabs collect samples that are then sent off to a lab for testing OR for rapid on-site testing.
- The test detects genetic material from the COVID-19 virus.
- It tells you YES or NO, you do or don't have an active case of COVID-19.
- What makes PCR the gold standard is its overall accuracy. It has both high sensitivity (ability to detect a positive case) and specificity (ability to detect a negative case). In other words, it is the most reliable for NOT giving false positives or false negatives.

It is often recommended that – if you've had direct contact with someone positive for COVID-19 – you wait several days before being tested. If done early enough in the incubation period, the test might not detect enough genetic material. This is why we ask you to stay home for 14 days even if you test negative.



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Antibody Test

Indicates if you've already been exposed

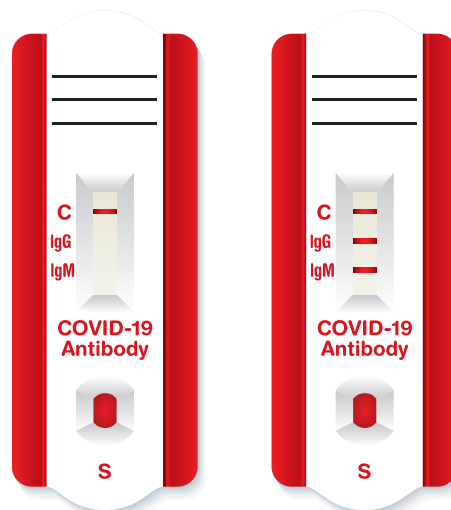
The antibody test is the rapid finger poke.

- It is not diagnostic and does not say if you are negative or positive for COVID-19.
- It looks backward in time, testing for antibodies in the blood.
- While it does NOT tell you if you have an active infection, it does indicate if you've

been exposed to COVID-19 or another coronavirus such as the common cold and have developed antibodies to fight it off.

- This may or may not give you immunity. Unfortunately, we don't know if or for how long that immunity lasts. Current guidance indicates it may last only a few months.

The antibody test uses the letters IGM and IGG. IGM indicates if the exposure is recent. IGG indicates it was long ago. Either way, people who test positive for antibodies still have to practice the 3Ws because immunity is not a guarantee.



Antigen Test

COVID-19



Also provides negative or positive result but may need additional testing to confirm

A new test – called an antigen test – is rapid and inexpensive. It is easily given at “point of care” and may become more and more available right in a doctor’s office – much like a strep test.

- A healthcare provider swabs your nose and twirls that sample on a test card with a testing reagent added.
- After waiting 15 minutes, the healthcare provider reads the results directly from the testing card.
- One line indicates a negative result; two lines indicate a positive result.

The antigen test looks at protein from the virus. It has high specificity –in other words, it is highly accurate in telling you you're negative. Unfortunately, the sensitivity is not as high. Therefore, if you test positive, you will likely need a PCR test to confirm a positive diagnosis for COVID-19.

Right now, the best use of this test is for people who have symptoms or have been exposed if given 5-7 days from the onset of symptoms. This is a great way to do screening on large groups such as university students or certain high-risk populations because of its ability to screen out negatives and focus only on presumptive positives for further testing.