UNDERSTANDING COVID-19 TESTING



SAMPLE COLLECTION

A swab is taken from the inside of the nose or back of the throat.



PROCESSING

Molecular tests detect whether there is genetic material from the virus.

TESTING FOR THE VIRUS

POSITIVE TEST RESULT

TRUE POSITIVE



You are currently infected. Almost all positive results are true positives.



FALSE POSITIVE



You are not infected, but test positive (very rare).

NEGATIVE TEST RESULT



TRUE NEGATIVE



You are not currently infected. There is no risk of infecting others.



FALSE NEGATIVE



You are infected, but test negative. Can happen when the test is done too early to detect the disease or when sample collection is poor.

POSITIVE TEST RESULT INDIVIDUAL ISOLATES



FALSE NEGATIVE TEST RESULT UNAWARE OF THEIR INFECTION AND COULD INFECT OTHERS



TESTING ACCURACY DEPENDS ON WHEN YOU GET TESTED

Test accuracy based on a 5 day incubation period from exposure to symptoms

INITIAL EXPOSURE



INCUBATING



SYMPTOMS



RECOVERING



WORST (DAYS 0-2)

Days 0-2 Very low virus

-98% not detected*



Those tested too early will be unaware of infection and may infect others.



Davs 0-5

Virus multiplying

-50% not detected*

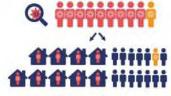
Up to half of those tested will get a false

negative result and may infect others.

BEST (DAYS 4-8)

Days 5+ Virus plentiful

~10% not detected*



Low false negative rate.

Days 15+ Virus decreasing

May not be infectious to others

May take longer to recover from severe disease

* Based on preliminary data and expert opinion. Some do not develop symptoms. Test accuracy for asymptomatic cases is unclear as it is not known where they are in the disease timeline.

TESTING FOR ANTIBODIES



A blood test detects antibodies to the virus that usually start to appear when a person is recovering. This blood test is not used to diagnose active COVID-19.



Research is underway to find out whether antibodies protect you from future infections.



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