

UNDERSTANDING COVID-19 TESTING



TESTING FOR THE VIRUS



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.

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)

BEST (DAYS 4-8)

Days 0-2
Very low virus

Days 0-5
Virus multiplying

Days 5+
Virus plentiful

Days 15+
Virus decreasing

-98% not detected*

-50% not detected*

-10% not detected*

May not be infectious to others



May take longer to recover from severe disease



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

Up to half of those tested will get a false negative result and may infect others.

Low false negative rate.

* 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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