

General FAQ from the CDC about multiple COVID issues:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html>

What does a positive PCR test for Covid 19 mean? (This is usually done with a deep nasopharyngeal swab – not a blood test)

IF YOU HAVE SYMPTOMS: Your PCR test being positive means you are very likely currently infected with the novel Coronavirus known as COVID 19.

Here is a link to the CDC's guidelines on isolation and quarantine restrictions:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html>

Our Health Department will be notified of the positive result and will be calling to reinforce the above information and trace any contacts you may have had while contagious.

Data has come to light that once you have been infected with COVID-19, a PCR test may stay positive for up to 3 months. Thankfully, scientists have not been able to grow LIVE virus **9 days** past the onset of symptoms. See our Return to Work/School/Daycare guidelines for more information.

What does a negative PCR test for Covid 19 mean? (Deep nasopharyngeal swab test)

This depends on many factors. A negative test means you are most likely NOT infected with the novel Coronavirus known as COVID 19.

Here is the issue; a false negative test can occur based on how difficult it is to obtain the specimen, the type of test done and simple failings of the testing process. Therefore, if you have symptoms consistent with Covid 19 and your test is negative, it is imperative to discuss this with your Healthcare Provider. Isolation and avoidance of other high risk individuals is still recommended.

The information from the CDC is still pertinent:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html>

What does a positive Covid 19 Antigen test mean? (Shallow nasal swab – like the flu test)

These tests are only recently available and are somewhat easier to perform, and provide a quicker result. A positive result is quite reliable and indicates you most likely are currently infected with the novel Coronavirus known as COVID 19.

Follow the CDC guidelines with your family and work situations, expect a call from the Loudoun County Health Department.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html>

What does a Negative Covid 19 antigen test mean? (Shallow nasal swab – like the flu test)

The higher false negative rate of this test makes this result more uncertain than the PCR test. There can be as high as a 20 percent false negative result, meaning, if you have symptoms consistent with COVID 19 you will still need to follow CDC guidelines if you are feeling ill.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html>

A negative antigen test in a patient with symptoms consistent with COVID 19 would ideally be followed up with a PCR test.

What does a positive COVID 19 antibody test mean?

Antibodies are proteins we make to defend ourselves from infections. There are 2 main types being tested for: IgM and IgG. IgM is produced early in an infection, likely by Day 7 of Covid 19. IgG is produced later and is considered a “memory” antibody. IgG production is usually 2-4 weeks after an infection.

With some viruses, the presence of IgG confers immunity. Some examples of this include Chickenpox and Measles. Unfortunately, this is not the case with other viruses, such as influenza or many of our gastrointestinal viruses.

Loudoun County COVID-19 Testing
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AT THIS TIME WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT A POSITIVE IgG means for Covid. Additionally, the IgG positive result can be a false positive, as other Corona virus family members can “fool” the test. These other members cause a common cold.

Hence, the IgG test is useful for tracking and research, but it does NOT mean an individual can change their own behavior toward this illness. Do not use it as a golden ticket to kiss your grandmother.

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Testing-Guidance.pdf>

What does a negative COVID 19 antibody test mean?

You either have not been exposed to COVID 19 or you are in the first weeks of illness and your levels cannot be detected. Hence this test should NOT be used on patient with active symptoms.

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Testing-Guidance.pdf>