



GUIDANCE ON INTERPRETING COVID-19 TEST RESULTS

	RESULT	INTERPRETATION	RECOMMENDED ACTION
VIRAL TESTING† (testing for current infection)	Positive	<i>Most likely*</i> you DO currently have an active COVID-19 infection and can give the virus to others.	Stay home* and follow CDC guidance on steps to take if you are sick. *If you are a healthcare or critical infrastructure worker, notify your work of your test result.
	Negative	<i>Most likely*</i> you DO NOT currently have an active COVID-19 infection.	If you have symptoms, you should keep monitoring symptoms and seek medical advice about staying home and if you need to get tested again. If you don't have symptoms, you should get tested again only if your medical provider and/or workplace tells you to. Take steps to protect yourself and others.
ANTIBODY TESTING‡ (testing for past infection with the virus)	Positive‡	You <i>likely*</i> have HAD a COVID-19 infection.	You may be protected from re-infection (have immunity), but this cannot be said with certainty. Scientists are conducting studies now to provide more information. Take steps to protect yourself and others.
	Negative	You <i>likely*</i> NEVER HAD (or have not yet developed antibodies to) COVID-19 infection.	You could still get COVID-19. Take steps to protect yourself and others.
BOTH (antibody and viral testing)	Viral Positive , Antibody Positive‡	<i>Most likely*</i> you DO currently have an active COVID-19 infection and can give the virus to others.	Stay home* and follow CDC guidance on steps to take if you are sick. *If you are a healthcare or critical infrastructure worker, notify your work of your test result.
	Viral Positive , Antibody Negative	<i>Most likely*</i> you DO currently have an active COVID-19 infection and can give the virus to others.	Stay home* and follow CDC guidance on steps to take if you are sick. *If you are a healthcare or critical infrastructure worker, notify your work of your test result.
	Viral Negative , Antibody Positive	You <i>likely*</i> have HAD and RECOVERED FROM a COVID-19 infection.	You may be protected from re-infection (have immunity), but this cannot be said with certainty. Scientists are conducting studies now to provide more information. You should get tested again only if your medical provider and/or workplace tells you to. Take steps to protect yourself and others.
	Viral Negative , Antibody Negative	You <i>likely*</i> have NEVER HAD a COVID-19 infection.	You could still get COVID-19. You should get tested again only if your medical provider and/or workplace tells you to. Take steps to protect yourself and others.

*No test is ever perfect. All tests occasionally result in false positive results (the test result should be negative because you DO NOT have COVID-19 but comes back positive) or false negative results (the test result should be positive because you DO have COVID-19, but comes back negative). Sometimes the results are not definitive (the result is unclear, and you don't know if it is positive or negative). For this and other reasons, results should always be reviewed by a healthcare professional.

† Viral tests are typically performed on respiratory specimens such as nasal swabs or throat swabs. They test for the presence of the virus, usually by testing for the virus's RNA or sometimes by testing for the virus's proteins ("antigen testing"). Antigen testing may be less sensitive than tests for the virus's RNA. If your antigen test is negative, please ask your healthcare provider if additional testing with an RNA test is needed and how long you should stay home.

‡ Antibody testing, also called "serologic testing" or "serology", is typically performed on a blood sample. Ideally, the results show whether you have ever been infected with the virus in the past or may be currently infected. Antibody tests check for antibodies that appear in the blood between about one and three weeks after symptom onset and may remain as long as a lifetime. Antibody tests may be positive while a person is infected. It is not yet known whether these antibodies protect against reinfection with the COVID-19 virus. For many other similar viruses, antibodies are protective for years or longer, but we do not yet have adequate data to know for COVID-19.