

Interim SARS-CoV-2 Self-Testing Guidance

Testing is critically important to help reduce the spread of COVID-19. If you have symptoms of COVID-19 you should [isolate](#) and get tested. If you are not fully vaccinated and you were exposed to someone who has COVID-19, you should quarantine and get tested. If you are fully vaccinated, you should get tested 3-5 days after the exposure, and wear a mask in public indoor settings for 14 days or until your test comes back negative.

If you develop symptoms of COVID-19, you should get tested as soon as you can. You can be tested by a healthcare provider, a public health testing site, or you can use either a **self-collection kit** or a **self-test** that can be performed at home or anywhere else. Sometimes a self-test is also called a “home test” or an “at-home test.” These self-collection kits and self-tests are available either by prescription or over-the-counter (without a prescription) in a pharmacy or retail store. Currently available self-collection kits and self-tests are used to check for current infection, meaning whether you have COVID-19 right now (not whether you had COVID-19 in the past).

This document provides guidance on what to do after a self-test. This means a test that you do by yourself at home, which is not prescribed by a healthcare provider or sent to a laboratory.

If you are using a self-test, make sure to read the full manufacturer’s instructions before using the test. Talk to a healthcare provider if you have questions about the test or your results. Some schools and workplaces might accept over-the-counter tests for return to work or school. You should discuss your results with your employer, school, etc. to determine if you are ready to return.

If Your Test Is Positive

You should assume you are infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 and take measures to get care you need and isolate away from others – whether or not you are fully vaccinated. Tell your healthcare provider about your positive test result and keep in touch with them during your illness. If you do not have a provider or need assistance with isolation, reach out to your [Care Connect](#) hub or call the Care Connect Hotline at 1-833-453-0336. If your illness becomes severe, seek medical attention. To avoid spreading the virus to others, follow [DOH recommendations](#), which have information for a person who tests positive and has symptoms, as well as for those who have a positive test without symptoms.

Positive results for self-tests can be reported to the Department of Health (DOH) by calling 1-800-525-0127 and DOH’s COVID-19 hotline personnel can guide callers through any questions they may have.

As much as possible, stay in a specific room and away from other people and pets in your home or place of residence. If possible, you should use a separate bathroom. If you need to be around other people or animals in or outside of the home or place of residence, wear a mask.

Don't share personal household items, like cups, towels, and utensils. Monitor your symptoms. If you develop symptoms of more severe disease including trouble breathing, seek emergency medical care immediately.

Tell your [close contacts](#) that they may have been exposed to COVID-19. An infected person can spread COVID-19 starting 48 hours (or 2 days) before the person has any symptoms or tests positive. By letting your close contacts know they may have been exposed to COVID-19, you are helping to protect everyone.

If Your Test Is Negative

A negative test result means that SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, was not detected by the test.

If you took the test while you had symptoms *and followed all instructions carefully*, a negative result means your current illness is **probably not** COVID-19. However, there is a chance that the test result was incorrect (a “false negative” test). This is why the CDC recommends you get a second, laboratory-based test from a healthcare provider or public health testing site. Getting a second test can help confirm that your current illness is not COVID-19. If you have symptoms and a negative self-test, you may not need confirmatory testing if you have a low likelihood of COVID-19, for example, you've had no known exposure to a person with COVID-19 within the past 14 days or you are fully vaccinated or have had COVID-19 in the past 3 months. Your healthcare provider can help you decide if you should get a second test.

While these tests are quite accurate when used correctly, sometimes a person without symptoms can also get a “false negative” result. You could also test negative if you took the test too early in your infection. In this case, you could test positive a few days later. If you are not fully vaccinated and have been exposed to someone who has COVID-19, you should [quarantine according to DOH recommendations even if your test is negative](#).

Some self-tests are designed to be used in a series. Serial testing is when a person tests themselves multiple times for COVID-19 on a routine basis, such as every few days. Please follow the manufacturer's instruction for use, including frequency of testing. By testing more frequently, you might detect COVID-19 more quickly and could reduce the spread of infection. Some self-tests come with more than one test and instructions for performing serial testing. If your self-test is negative, you should follow the manufacturer's instructions for serial testing. They will likely recommend you test again within 2 or 3 days. Contact a healthcare provider if you have any questions about your test results or serial testing.

If Your Result Shows Invalid or Error

Sometimes the results are not clear or are inconclusive, and the test is unable to tell you if your results are positive or negative. Invalid results can occur for many reasons. Your specimen may not have been collected correctly or the test kit may have malfunctioned. Invalid test results are rare but can occur.

If the display on the self-test shows an invalid result or a test error, the test did not work properly. If this happens, refer to the instructions that came with the test and contact the manufacturer for assistance. You can also get testing from a healthcare provider or a [public health testing site](#).

More COVID-19 Information and Resources

Stay up-to-date on the [current COVID-19 situation in Washington](#), [Governor Inslee's proclamations](#), [symptoms](#), [how it spreads](#), and [how and when people should get tested](#). See our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) for more information.

A person's race/ethnicity or nationality does not, itself, put them at greater risk of COVID-19. However, data are revealing that communities of color are being disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. This is due to the effects of racism, and in particular, structural racism, that leaves some groups with fewer opportunities to protect themselves and their communities. [Stigma will not help to fight the illness](#). Share only accurate information to keep rumors and misinformation from spreading.

- [WA State Department of Health 2019 Novel Coronavirus Outbreak \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [WA State Coronavirus Response \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Find Your Local Health Department or District](#)
- [CDC Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Stigma Reduction Resources](#)

Have more questions? Call our COVID-19 Information hotline: **1-800-525-0127**

Monday – 6 a.m. to 10 p.m., Tuesday – Sunday and [observed state holidays](#), 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. For interpretative services, **press #** when they answer and **say your language**. For questions about your own health, COVID-19 testing, or testing results, please contact a health care provider.

To request this document in another format, call 1-800-525-0127. Deaf or hard of hearing customers, please call 711 ([Washington Relay](#)) or email civil.rights@doh.wa.gov.