

Interim COVID-19 Self-Testing Guidance

Summary of June 23, 2022 Changes

- Updated to link to DOH guidance on what to do based on test results.
- Updated to link to DOH guidance for what to do if exposed to COVID-19.
- Updated information on how to access self-tests.
- Added information on notifying close contacts, including use of WA Notify.

Introduction

Testing is critically important to help reduce the spread of COVID-19. Testing is useful in multiple situations:

- If you have symptoms of COVID-19, you should get tested as soon as possible and follow the steps in [COVID-19 Symptom Decision Trees](#).
- If you are exposed to someone who has COVID-19, you should follow the guidance in [What to do if you were potentially exposed to someone with COVID-19](#), including testing.
- You may sometimes test in advance of an upcoming activity, such as travel, even if you do not have symptoms and are not aware of being exposed to someone with COVID-19.

You can be tested by a healthcare provider, a public health testing site, or 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.” Currently available self-collection kits and self-tests are used to check for current infection, meaning you have COVID-19 right now, not that you had COVID-19 in the past.

Self-collection kits and self-tests are available either by prescription or over-the-counter (without a prescription) in a pharmacy or retail store. Households across the state are eligible to receive free COVID-19 tests from the Department of Health (DOH) through its Say Yes! COVID Test initiative. This is in addition to any federal initiative. Households can place two orders each month, which includes up to 10 free tests per month. Orders can be submitted online via [Home - Say Yes! To Covid Test \(sayyescovidhometest.org\)](#) or via the DOH COVID-19 Hotline 1-800-525-0127. It is important to be prepared and have tests available on hand to test when needed. Tests are expected to be delivered in 1-2 weeks, though many tests are delivered within 48 hours of receipt of the order.

This document provides guidance on what to do after a self-test. This means a test that you do yourself, 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 complete manufacturer’s instructions before using the test. Talk to a healthcare provider if you have questions about your results. Some schools and workplaces may 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

If you test positive with a self-test, refer to the Washington State DOH [What to do if you test positive for COVID-19](#) guidance for detailed information on how to protect yourself and others, including information on isolation, and how to access treatment if you are at increased risk for severe disease. Tell your healthcare provider about your positive test result and keep in touch with them during your illness. If you have questions and cannot access a healthcare provider, call the WA DOH Hotline at 1-800-525-0127.

Positive results for self-tests can be reported to DOH by calling 1-800-525-0127, and DOH's COVID-19 hotline personnel can guide callers through any questions they may have.

If you need assistance with isolation, such as with food, personal care kits, or other needs, you can call the WA DOH Hotline at 1-800-525-0127 or reach out to your [Care Connect](#) hub. If you need assistance with isolation, please report your test result through the hotline to prevent delays in accessing assistance. Tell your close contacts they may have been exposed to COVID-19 and send them [What to do if you were potentially exposed to someone with COVID-19](#). Being a close contact generally means a person has been within 6 feet of someone with COVID-19 for at least 15 cumulative minutes or more over a 24-hour period of time. If, however, you have been in situations that increase the risk of potential exposure, such as confined spaces, poor ventilation or performing activities such as shouting or singing, there is still a risk for infecting others even if they are more than 6 feet away from you. You can spread COVID-19 starting 48 hours (or 2 days) before you have any symptoms and for at least 10 days after you develop symptoms. If you do not develop symptoms but test positive for COVID-19, you could have spread COVID-19 starting 48 hours (or 2 days) before you test positive and for at least 10 days after your positive test. If your isolation period is longer than 10 days, such as because you are still experiencing symptoms or are severely ill or immunocompromised, you are considered contagious through the end of your isolation period. By letting your close contacts know they may have been exposed to COVID-19, you are helping to protect everyone.

If you use [WA Notify](#) and test positive for COVID-19 with a self-test, you can use WA Notify to anonymously alert other users you may have exposed by requesting a verification code and confirming your result in the app. This will notify people using the app who were potentially exposed so they may take precautions to protect themselves and the people around them. No personal or identifiable information is collected or shared when you use WA Notify. To request a verification code:

1. Either click this [link](#) or scan this QR code:



2. Enter the phone number of your device that uses WA Notify and the date of your positive COVID-19 test.
3. Select “Continue.”

Please visit the “[How to request a verification code for positive at-home COVID-19 test results](#)” section on [WANotify.org](#) for more information. If you would like to learn more about WA Notify, including how to add it to your phone, visit [WANotify.org](#).

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 at that time.

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 the test result was incorrect (a “false negative” test). If you have symptoms of COVID-19 or a higher likelihood of COVID-19 infection (such as being in an area where the COVID-19 [community level](#) is high or if you had close contact with or suspected exposure to someone with COVID-19), the [CDC recommends](#) either a confirmatory laboratory-based test from a healthcare provider or public health testing site, or a “serial” antigen test be performed 24-48 hours after the first test. Getting another test can help confirm your current illness is **not** COVID-19. See the DOH [Symptom Decision Tree for Non-Health Care Settings and the Public](#) for more information.

Serial testing is when a person tests multiple times, such as every few days. By testing frequently, you may detect COVID-19 more quickly and reduce the spread of infection. The self-collection kits often come with a second test and are designed to be used in a series. If your first self-test is negative, you should follow the manufacturer’s instructions for serial testing. These commonly call for testing to be performed at least twice over three days, with at least 24 hours and no more than 48 hours between tests. Contact a healthcare provider if you have any questions about your test results or serial testing. Technical assistance can often be obtained by calling the manufacturer’s phone number or emailing them, using information on the instruction sheet.

If you were exposed to someone who has COVID-19 and serially test negative, continue to follow the guidance in [What to do if you were potentially exposed to someone with COVID-19](#).

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, such as your specimen may not have been collected correctly or the self-collection 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 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.