

Expired COVID-19 Tests FAQ

Don't throw out your expired COVID-19 tests just yet. Here are the ways to know if your COVID-19 test is still good to use past the expiration date listed on the box.

Can I use an expired COVID-19 test?

Yes. The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) released an [official approval for the use of expired tests](#) (in English) so long as the test passes quality control, which we explain below.

In addition, some COVID-19 tests receive shelf-life extensions from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), which gives those tests new expiration dates different from what you see on the box. You can look up the [FDA list of tests with extended shelf lives](#) (in English and Spanish) to see which tests have an updated expiration date. Even if a test has an updated expiration date that is now in the past, per DOH, you can still use the test if it passes quality control.

The takeaway: You can use an expired test so long as it passes the built-in quality control check.

How do I know that an expired COVID-19 test will give me correct results?

Your COVID-19 test will come with instructions on the steps to take to ensure the test is working reliably, also called "quality control." You can usually find the quality control process in the test result section on the test instructions sheet. The quality control process for many at-home tests is simply making sure the line next to the "C" printed on the test cartridge shows up when the specimen is dropped on it. If the quality control process fails, you should discard the test.

How does a test receive an extended shelf life?

Manufacturers of COVID-19 tests are required to do studies that look at how long a test can be used. The FDA tracks this data to approve extended expiration dates. Shelf-life extensions for COVID-19 tests are normal as more data comes in about how long these tests last.

We hope this information reassures you when using tests that seem expired based on the expiration date on the box. Now you know what to do to see if your COVID-19 test is good to use: simply follow the test instructions for quality control. If the test passes quality control, it is still safe and good to use.

Thank you for all you do to keep our communities safe and healthy!

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