

UNDERSTANDING COVID-19 TESTS¹



It can be overwhelming to understand the different types of COVID-19 tests and how to interpret their results. This chart offers a snapshot of the different types of COVID-19 tests, analysis options and how to interpret results.

TEST TYPE	ANALYSIS OPTIONS	RESULT		INTERPRETATION	RECOMMENDATION
VIRAL (Current infection)	Point-of-care* or lab-based ⁺	Positive	☹️	Donor likely has COVID-19 and is contagious.	Self-quarantine and follow the CDC's guidance.
		Negative	😊	Donor likely does not currently have COVID-19.	If donor has symptoms, monitor symptoms and seek medical advice.
ANTIBODY (Past infection)	Lab-based ⁺	Positive	😐	Donor has likely HAD COVID-19.	Donor has antibodies but immunity has not yet been confirmed by doctors. Donor should continue taking steps to protect themselves and others.
		Negative	😐	Donor has not likely had COVID-19 or did not develop antibodies to COVID-19.	Donor could still get COVID-19. Take steps to protect themselves and others.
BOTH (Antibody and viral testing, current and past infection)	Lab-based ⁺	Viral AND antibody positive	☹️	Donor most likely has COVID-19 and is contagious.	Self-quarantine and follow the CDC's guidance.
		Viral positive, antibody negative	☹️		
		Viral negative, antibody positive	😐	Donor likely HAD COVID-19 but has recovered.	Donor may not be subject to re-infection; however, should continue taking steps to protect themselves and others.
		Viral AND antibody negative	😊	Donor likely has never had COVID-19.	Donor could still get COVID-19. Take steps to protect themselves and others.

* Point-of-care test (POCT) or instant test results are typically available at the testing site within an hour of performance of the test.
⁺ Lab-based tests must be sent to a laboratory for analysis. Once the lab receives the test, analysis typically takes 1–2 days.

1. This chart is based on the CDC chart titled "Guidance On Interpreting COVID-19 Test Results", which can be found at the following link: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Testing-Guidance.pdf>.

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