



COVID-19 Self-Test Frequently Asked Questions

Why Use a COVID-19 Self-Test?

COVID-19 self-testing is one of the actions you can take to protect yourself and your close contacts. To [protect yourself and others](#) against COVID-19, you should:

- Get the COVID-19 vaccine and your booster
- Wear a mask
- Practice social distancing, whenever possible

Are COVID-19 self-tests difficult to use?

Self-tests can be taken at home or anywhere, are easy to use, and produce quick results.

Some kits have two test cards. Can I use one of them for two people?

Each kit is meant for one person, whether the kit contains one test or two tests. If you are using a kit that contains two tests: if your first test is negative, use the second test 24-48 hours later, per manufacturer's instructions.

When should I use it?

- Use a self-test if you are feeling sick to quickly learn if you might have COVID-19
- Use a self-test after you're notified that you have been [exposed to someone with COVID-19](#). If it is negative, you can repeat the test five days after exposure
- Use a self-test before going to indoor gatherings to evaluate your risk of spreading COVID-19

If I am vaccinated or unvaccinated, will the test still work?

Yes. You can use self-tests, regardless of vaccination status.

How long do I need to be sick before I use the test kit?

You can use self-tests, even when you are not sick. Someone with COVID-19 symptoms should get tested as soon as possible.

What does a positive COVID-19 self-test result mean?

[If you test positive](#), you should [isolate](#) and inform your healthcare provider, as well as any [close contacts](#). You **do not** need to get another test through a doctor or pharmacy.

- A positive self-test result means that the test detected the virus, and you are very likely to have COVID-19

- Stay home or isolate for [five days](#), even if you are asymptomatic or your symptoms are resolving
- Wear a mask if you have contact with others
- Avoid indoor gatherings to reduce the risk of spreading disease to someone else

What does a negative COVID-19 self-test mean?

A negative self-test result means that the test did not detect the virus and you may not have an infection, *but it does not entirely rule out infection*. Repeating the test within a few days, with at least 24 hours between tests, will increase the confidence that you are not infected. (That is why each kit comes with two tests.) **If you do not feel well, regardless of a negative test result, you should stay home.**

What does an inconclusive or invalid COVID-19 self-test mean?

If your home test is inconclusive, use the second test card and try again. If both are inconclusive, then consider getting tested through your health care provider, a pharmacy, or at a community site.

Do I need to report my COVID-19 test result to the state or local health authorities?

No. You do not need to report your result to public health authorities, but you should tell your [close contacts](#) (people you have spent time with lately) that you have COVID-19, so that they can get tested and protect others, too. In addition, if a child who attends daycare or school tests positive, you should inform the institution.

Will this test detect variants?

Self-tests will not tell you which variant of the virus has been detected. FDA has been monitoring the potential impact of genetic variants on antigen tests (self-tests are antigen tests). Early data suggests that antigen tests do detect the omicron variant but may have reduced sensitivity. [Click here for more information.](#)

For more information on self-test kits, please visit the CDC website at: [Self-Testing | CDC](#)