When to Take an At-Home COVID-19 Test

At-home COVID-19 testing is one of our best tools to prevent the spread of the virus—alongside getting vaccinated and boosted. COVID-19 vaccines are highly effective at preventing infection, hospitalization, and serious illness, but no vaccine prevents 100% of infections. As the virus continues to evolve and cases are projected to spike seasonally, at-home testing helps you to determine if you have COVID-19 so you can prevent spreading it to others. Here are key scenarios and considerations to help you determine when you should take an at-home COVID-19 test and what to do when you get your results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>scenarios</th>
<th>actions</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You have symptoms of COVID-19. Refer to the CDC site for more information on COVID-19 symptoms.</td>
<td>Take an At-Home Covid-19 Test</td>
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<tr>
<td>You had close contact with someone who has COVID-19. Wear a high-quality mask after you find out you’ve been exposed, and get tested 5 days after exposure.</td>
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<tr>
<td>You will be with someone who is immunocompromised or at high risk for severe COVID-19. Wear a high-quality mask as an additional precaution.</td>
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<tr>
<td>You plan to attend an event or gathering. Consider testing right before you go to an indoor gathering as a precautionary measure.</td>
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**If your at-home COVID-19 test is positive:**

You should stay home and isolate away from others for at least 5 days after testing positive.

**When to end isolation:**

- After **5 days** if you have been fever-free for 24 hours and you had **mild or asymptomatic** COVID-19.
- After **10 days** if you had **moderate or severe illness** and/or you are **immunocompromised**. Consult your healthcare provider for further guidance.
- If you ended isolation but your COVID-19 symptoms **recur or worsen**, you should restart your isolation from **day 0** and consider re-testing.
- Consider taking an at-home COVID-19 test to ensure you’re **no longer infected**.

**Continued precautions:**

- After you have ended isolation and no longer experience symptoms, **wear a high-quality mask through day 10** when around others.

**Treatment and care:**

- If you experience **severe symptoms**, such as difficulty breathing or chest pain, seek medical care immediately.
- If you are at **high risk** for severe COVID-19, consult your health care provider **right away** to discuss whether you need antiviral medication.

**If your at-home COVID-19 test is negative:**

Re-test **24–48 hours after your first test**, especially if you are continuing to experience symptoms. A **negative test doesn’t rule out infection**.

**Continued precautions:**

- If you were exposed to COVID-19, take precautions to protect yourself and others (i.e. retesting, wearing a high-quality mask) for 10 days after exposure, even if you test negative. Follow the **CDC guidelines on COVID-19 exposure**.
- **Knowing your COVID-19 Community Level** can help you decide if you should take additional precautions, especially if you tested as a precaution before attending a gathering or spending time with someone at high risk.

**Treatment and care:**

- If you continue to receive negative test results but symptoms persist, contact your healthcare provider.

Recommendations are from the CDC and current as of February 2023. For the latest COVID-19 information and testing guidelines, visit [CDC.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus).