

Types of COVID-19 Testing

	Molecular test	Antigen test	Antibody test
Also known as:	Diagnostic test, viral test, nucleic acid amplification test (NAAT), RT-PCR test, LAMP test	Rapid diagnostic test (note: some molecular tests are also rapid tests)	Serological test, serology, blood test, serology test
What it's designed to do:	Diagnose active COVID-19 infection	Diagnose active COVID-19 infection in people who have symptoms	Possibly indicate recent infection (IgG) or current infection (IgM) at time of test
What it can't do:	Show if you've had COVID-19 in the past	It is more likely than a molecular test to miss an active infection, and cannot definitively rule out COVID-19. Your provider may order a molecular test if an antigen test shows a negative result.	Diagnose active infection or show that you do not have COVID-19. Your provider may order a molecular test if you have symptoms but an antibody test shows a negative result.
How the sample is taken:	Nasal or throat swab (more common) or saliva (less common)	Nasal or throat swab	Finger stick or blood draw
How long results take:	Same-day (some locations) or up to a week	One hour or less	Same-day (many locations) or 1-3 days
Is another test needed?	This test is typically highly accurate and usually does not need to be repeated.	Positive results are usually highly accurate, but negative results may need to be confirmed with a molecular test.	A complete antibody test (IgG and IgM) is needed for accurate results. A molecular test is best for people who have symptoms.