Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Frequently Asked Questions About Testing

Updated March 20, 2020

During this time of anticipated large demand on the health care delivery system, you are asked to avoid unscheduled visits to your health care provider. It is important to call ahead.

People who are mildly ill should not go to emergency departments. Mildly ill people should stay home and contact their health care provider by phone for guidance.

Like all laboratory tests, testing for COVID-19 is a clinical decision made by a health care provider. Testing for COVID-19 may not be appropriate for everyone. Testing availability will expand as more testing supplies become available.

Where am I able to be tested? Who do I contact?

Health care providers order COVID-19 testing, so you will need to discuss testing with a health care provider. Please keep in mind that a health care provider's decision to order COVID-19 testing is based on several factors, including clinical judgment, availability of testing supplies and ability to safely collect specimens for testing. At this time, the Maryland Department of Health and local health departments do not collect specimens for COVID-19 testing.

Can I get a test on my own without a provider?

No, a health care provider must order COVID-19 testing, collect specimens for testing, and then send the specimens to a laboratory to complete the testing.

My healthcare provider said I can't be tested. Why can't I be tested?

Health care providers order COVID-19 testing, so making the determination as to a patient's needs

for COVID-19 testing is up to your health care provider. Please keep in mind that a health care provider's decision to order COVID-19 testing is based on several factors, including clinical judgment, the availability of testing supplies and lab resources. People who do not have symptoms of COVID-19 disease do not need to be tested.

I don't meet the criteria to be tested. Why can't I get tested anyway?

Testing is not indicated for everyone. A clinician can order COVID-19 testing where it is clinically warranted. A health care provider's decision to order COVID-19 testing is based on several factors, including clinical judgment, local conditions and the current availability of testing supplies and lab resources.

What does the test consist of? What is the process?

Each laboratory has specific requirements for testing. Generally, the test involves a swab of the nose. If your health care provider recommends testing, your health care provider will inform you of what type of specimen needs to be collected.

How long does it take to receive results?

The results will be received by your provider in a times frame from a few days to several days, depending on laboratory testing demands and resources. Please discuss with your health care provider how long it will take to get results, which laboratory will be doing the testing and how you will receive your results.

Why do we not have enough tests?

COVID-19 is a new infection. Laboratories are working rapidly to increase the capacity to do testing. The availability of testing will expand as more testing supplies become available.

How do people who are tested get their results?

It is the responsibility of the entity that submitted the test to inform the patient of the results. Please discuss with your health care provider how long it will take to get results, which laboratory will be doing the testing and how you will receive your results.

I might have been exposed to a confirmed case of COVID-19. What do I do?

The recommendations for what you should do if you were exposed to a confirmed case of COVID19 depend on what type of contact you had with the person diagnosed with COVID-19.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), close contact is defined as being within approximately 6 feet (2 meters) of a COVID-19 case for a prolonged period of time. All people, especially close contacts, should carefully monitor for any signs of illness, check their temperature twice a day and if illness or a temperature of 100.4F or greater develops, they should immediately isolate themselves from other people and call a doctor for advice.

Current CDC guidance also recommends that if you have had close contact with a confirmed case, you should stay home from work or school for 14 days after the last exposure to monitor for symptoms and contact your healthcare provider.

Do local health departments have to approve all testing first?

No. Your health care provider can order COVID-19 testing without consulting with the state local health department.

Will I have to pay for the COVID-19 test?

If you have a health insurance plan regulated by the state of Maryland, you should not have to pay for the test. You should contact your health insurance plan at the number on your identification card to see if your plan is regulated by Maryland.

Will my insurance cover treatment if I test positive for COVID-19?

Health insurance plans cover medically necessary treatment for disease, but the treatment may be subject to deductibles, copayments, and coinsurance. You will need to pay those amounts, even if the care is covered. If you have a limited benefits plan, there may be additional limits on what is covered.