

FAQ: Rapid Testing for Symptomatic Persons Under Investigation (PUIs)

What type of test is this?

PUIs will be tested using a “rapid test” which looks for genetic evidence of the virus. This test may be slightly less sensitive for people who do not have any symptoms than the regular test (for which results take ~48 hours) but results are available in ~15 minutes, making it ideal for persons who are currently symptomatic and who need immediate results.

What will the experience of being tested be like?

The test involves inserting a small, thin, sterile (clean) swab, similar to a cotton swab, into each nostril. It is very safe, and not painful, but it may be uncomfortable for a few moments. The test does not put you at any additional risk of getting COVID-19.

Who will be administering the test?

The test will be administered by trained staff from Lawndale Christian Health Center.

What happens if my test is positive?

If you test positive, it means that you have COVID-19. Most people with COVID-19 have mild symptoms or no symptoms, and most do not require hospitalization or even to see the doctor. The most common symptoms are cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fever, chills, muscle pain, sore throat and loss of taste or smell.

However, COVID-19 can be a serious condition. If you have COVID-19, you should look for emergency warning signs, such as trouble breathing, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, inability to wake or stay awake, bluish lips or face, or being newly confused.

If you have COVID-19, you could pass the virus on to other people who have contact with you. To be safe, it’s important for you to avoid contact with other people for 10 days starting the first day you first developed symptoms (like fever or cough) and 3 days after your symptoms have resolved – whichever is longer. The testing team will offer you a bed at a facility where you can stay, free of charge, or provide guidance on how to isolate at your current facility.

What happens if my test is negative?

For most people, a negative result means that you did not have COVID-19 at the time you were tested. However, no test is 100% accurate, there is a possibility this test can miss the virus. Therefore, if you have any of the three major warning symptoms of COVID-19 (a new fever, cough or shortness of breath), you will need a regular test, which takes around 48 hours, to confirm you do not have COVID-19. Until the results of both tests are back, you should make sure you wear a mask and stay away from others as much as possible.

Remember, too, that COVID-19 is currently spreading in the community. Any time you have contact with someone else, there is a risk that you might get the virus. We should always take precautions to protect ourselves and others, like wearing a face covering, keeping at least 6 feet of distance between ourselves and other people, and regularly washing our hands. Many people with COVID-19 do not get symptoms, so it’s possible to have the virus without realizing it. A good tip is to always act like you – and anyone around you – could be carrying the virus.

Who will my test results be shared with?

Your test results will be shared with you and a staff member at the shelter. Your result will also be entered into a city-wide database developed by the Chicago Department of Public Health.

This version was released on 6/23/2020. It may be updated with new guidance.