

What Does my COVID-19 Test Result Mean?

If you have tested positive for a current infection of COVID-19 (COVID-19 was detected by a PCR or antigen test), whether you had symptoms or not at the time of testing, please visit <https://dph.georgia.gov/isolation-contact> to obtain isolation guidance and return to work guidelines.

If you have tested negative for a current infection of COVID-19 (COVID-19 was not-detected by a PCR or antigen test), you should consider these results in combination with your symptom and exposure history.

- If you have tested negative for COVID-19, or COVID-19 was not-detected and you have symptoms: A negative test usually means you do not have a COVID-19 infection. However, it is still possible that you may be infected, but are too early in the course of your illness to test positive. Therefore, you should still follow recommended isolation precautions for those who are positive for COVID-19 (<https://dph.georgia.gov/isolation-contact>). If your illness continues or gets worse, consider calling your healthcare provider.
- If you have tested negative for COVID-19, or COVID-19 was not-detected and you do NOT have symptoms: A negative test means you were probably not infected at the time your sample was collected. However, it is possible that you could be infected with SARS-COV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, but with levels too low to be detected by the test or you are too early in the course of your illness for a positive test. It is possible to be infected and infectious to others without having symptoms of the virus. **Therefore, a negative test does not mean that you do not have or that you will not get the virus. You should still take precautions to protect yourself and others including following social distancing, hand hygiene, and cough etiquette guidelines.**
 - If you have a known exposure to a COVID-19 case: You should continue to monitor your symptoms for 14 days after your last known exposure and pursue additional testing if symptoms develop. See full guidance to follow if you were exposed to COVID-19 here: <https://dph.georgia.gov/contact>.
 - If you do NOT have a known exposure to a COVID-19 case: You should still take precautions to protect yourself and others including following social distancing, hand hygiene, and cough etiquette guidelines and pursue additional testing if symptoms develop.

If your PCR or antigen test is inconclusive or indeterminate for COVID-19, it means that a small amount of viral DNA was identified but it was not enough to test positive. Your sample will need to be collected again and retested to get accurate results. In the meantime, you should treat this as a positive result for COVID-19. Therefore, whether you had symptoms or not at the time of testing, please visit <https://dph.georgia.gov/isolation-contact> to obtain isolation guidance and return to work guidelines.

If your PCR or antigen test was not completed for COVID-19 or invalid, it means your sample was not able to be tested at the laboratory for some reason. Reasons for not testing may include failure to collect the specimen properly, specimen was mislabeled, problems in transport to laboratory, incorrect data, etc. This does not mean you don't have COVID-19. Your sample would need to be collected again and retested to get accurate results.

What does it mean if I have two PCR or antigen tests with opposite results?

We know that tests are not perfect. If you take a number of tests you may get different results. This can be due to multiple reasons such as the amount of virus in your respiratory tract at the time sample was collected or how the sample was collected. It is important to speak with your clinician if you have any specific questions.

If you have received a positive PCR COVID-19 test, you should act as if you have COVID-19 regardless of other test results. PCR tests for COVID-19 are the best test we have to detect COVID-19. They are the “gold-standard” of tests and more sensitive than antigen tests.

Antigen tests work best if you have symptoms. They are less accurate if you have no symptoms. Therefore:

- If you have symptoms of COVID-19, and receive a positive antigen test result you should act as though you have COVID-19, even if you receive additional negative tests. Please follow isolation protocols found here: <https://dph.georgia.gov/isolation-contact>.
- If you have no symptoms of COVID-19, receive a positive antigen test result AND receive a negative PCR test result within 48 hours of each other, then you would not be considered to be currently infected with COVID-19.