

What is COVID -19?

COVID-19 stands for Corona Virus Disease 2019. It is also known as Sars-Cov-2, which is known as severe acute respiratory syndrome, corona virus 2.

How do I know if I have it?

Several people are asymptomatic or have mild disease, which are cold-like symptoms. Loss of taste and smell has also been reported. However, some people are significantly ill, requiring intensive care unit stays and sometimes severe disease can result in death. There are a couple ways to test for it, with a swab test or an antibody test, as noted below.

What is the antibody test?

The antibody test checks a sample of a patient's blood to look for antibodies that form to fight the infection. There are two antibodies -- IgM and IgG. If someone is acutely infected, IgM forms to fight the infection. After someone has fought the disease and recovered, IgG antibody forms. These tests are highly accurate; however, where the disease is in its course can also affect the results of these tests. For example, if someone is acutely infected, within hours or a few days, the IgM may not have had time to form and will thus be negative. Currently, there is only an IgG antibody test that will test for past exposure to the virus. The patients who have a positive IgG can potentially be convalescent plasma donors for other patients who are acutely infected with COVID-19.

What is the swab test?

A swab test can be a nasal or saliva test, which identifies the virus in the samples. It can be done by taking a swab from the deeper part of the nose. Swab is then sent to a lab for processing. It usually takes 1-2 days to process. If you test positive, you should quarantine yourself for two weeks. If you test negative, it is likely that you do not have the disease at the time swab was taken. However, the way the sample is collected can vary among individuals, and this may play a role in someone having a negative test but actually being positive. Furthermore, the timing of where the disease is in its course varies in the amount of the presence in the nasopharynx, which can give a false negative as well.

Which one should I have?

Ideally, the best test to have is a combination of the antibodies test and nasal swab to have the most accurate information. However, due to the recent rise in number of cases of corona virus, it is important to trace asymptomatic people who are carrying this virus with no symptoms by doing nasal swabs. So, if more people are tested via nasal swabs, it is better for public health officials to determine areas of high concentration of the disease. Also if you have symptoms like cough, fever more than 100 degrees Fahrenheit, loss of smell, breathing problems, or if you are immunocompromised, or if you have come in contact with someone who has been diagnosed with corona virus disease in last 14 days, you should be tested by having the nasal swab done.

What does the test mean to me?

If you are quarantining yourself and not going outside whatsoever, the test may not mean much to you. However, with the nation slowly opening its doors to businesses, more people will have to go out for work, errands, or simply pleasure. Knowing that you have the disease can help protect other people. Furthermore, the more people who get tested and stay quarantined if they are positive, the higher the chances are of saving someone else's life.

How great is it that we, as a population, can physically save each other's lives by working as a team, getting tested, and quarantining ourselves the right way?

What should I do if my swab test is positive?

You should be quarantined for 14 days as you may spread virus to your contacts. Then you should have consecutive two negative swabs before coming out of quarantine.

Who should have antibody test done?

Even though you have not developed symptoms of corona virus, the virus might have entered in your body (asymptomatic cases) and your body has produced antibodies against this virus. To detect this antibody, this blood work is done. Blood is centrifuged to separate serum from blood. Antibodies are detected in serum if positive. This test is more reliable than having finger prick done. We currently do not know how long antibodies persists in our body to give lasting immunity.

What should I do if my report is positive for antibody?

If the test is positive for antibody, it means you have developed antibodies against this virus. You need not to be quarantined. You are a potential candidate for plasma donor. If you want to be a donor, contact your local Red Cross office. Plasma infusion is one of the treatments used to fight this disease.

Is any charge for Nasal swab test?

There is no charge for nasal swab test. Wake County will absorb the cost of this test.

Is there any charge for antibody test?

Most health insurances will cover the cost of this test, you do not have to pay copay or deductible. But if you do not have health insurance, there is minimal charge of \$30 for this test.

Can I have both test done?

Yes if you want, you can be tested for both tests at the site.