

COVID-19 Testing FAQs

1. Who should be tested for COVID-19?

Individuals who have symptoms of COVID-19 should be tested for the SARS-CoV-2 virus so that they will know to isolate themselves from others so as not to spread the disease. In certain cases, such as an outbreak investigation, testing of people without symptoms might also be indicated.

2. Should I get tested for the coronavirus?

Not everyone needs to be tested for COVID-19. Decisions to perform testing for COVID-19 should be made by clinicians, who should take into consideration your risk of exposure to the virus, your symptoms, any potential medical complications, and local levels of the disease. Right now, largely due to the current strain on the U.S.'s testing laboratories, the Northern Kentucky Health Department and the CDC are recommending that only those with symptoms seek testing.

3. What is the difference between PCR, rapid antigen testing, and antibody testing?

There are three types of tests for SARS-CoV-2, the novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19.

- **Polymerase chain reaction (PCR)** testing uses a nasal or oral swab to detect the virus itself and will indicate an active infection or a very recent infection. This test needs to be performed by a healthcare professional or under the direct supervision of a healthcare professional. If you are having symptoms of active infection, such as cough and fever, the PCR test should be used to detect the virus and diagnose COVID-19. It is considered the gold standard for testing. *Currently in Kentucky, all PCR tests are covered by insurance, regardless of whether you are showing any symptoms of COVID-19 or whether the test was ordered by a clinician.*
- **Rapid antigen testing** is a nasal or oral swab test for a protein that make up part of the SARS-CoV-2 molecule. It is quick and easy to perform, and results are available generally in less than an hour. However, this test is not very sensitive, which means that many people who have COVID-19 will show a negative screening result. It does have high specificity, though, which means that those without COVID-19 will test negative (though there are occasionally errors here as well, especially when the disease presence is low). Rapid antigen testing is currently recommended only in cases in which you have symptomatic patients in populations with a high prevalence of disease (e.g., a nursing facility or a prison) and you are trying to narrow the number of people who should get a PCR test. (In this case, you would test everyone quickly with the antigen test and then use the PCR test only on those who tested negative.)
- **Antibody testing** (or serology testing) is a blood test that looks for a person's immune response to the virus. Antibodies are proteins made by the body to fight off viruses and other pathogens that cause infections. If antibodies are found after testing, this suggests

you have been infected with SARS-CoV-2, even if you didn't have symptoms. The antibody test gives information about prior COVID-19 exposure, not current disease.

4. Where do I go to get tested?

If you have symptoms of COVID-19 and you have health insurance, you should contact your health provider to get a test ordered. Your provider will tell you where you can get tested. If you do not have symptoms of COVID-19 but would like a test anyway and you have health insurance, you could go to the St. Elizabeth Healthcare Urgent Care Center on Nunn Drive next to campus. Additional facilities in our region offering testing are available on the [Northern Kentucky Health Department testing website](#).

If you do not have health insurance, you should contact NKU's Director of Health Services (Rose Tempel) to get a test scheduled. *We will provide testing at no cost on campus for students, faculty, and staff who do not have health insurance.* (Note: if you are an athlete, then special testing protocols will be in place for you and your athletic trainer will have more information regarding your testing schedule.)

5. How long does it take to get PCR test results?

The time it takes to get testing results in the U.S. can vary depending on a variety of factors, including the capacity of lab used and how many tests are being done in a particular location. Currently, in the northern Kentucky region, it takes 2-5 days to receive test results. However, campus athletes should be able to get their test results in 24 hours per special arrangement with Gravity Diagnostics, our testing partner.

6. What do the test results mean?

If you test positive for COVID-19 with an antigen or PCR test, you should follow the CDC's guidelines [if you are sick or caring for someone who is sick](#).

If you test negative for COVID-19 with a PCR test, then you probably were not infected at the time your sample was collected. However, that does not mean you will not get sick. The test result only means that you did not have COVID-19 at the time of testing. You might test negative if the sample was collected early in your infection and test positive later during your illness. You could also be exposed to COVID-19 after the test and get infected then. This means you could still spread the virus. If you develop symptoms later, you might need another test to determine if you are infected with the virus that causes COVID-19. But, even if you test negative, you still should [take steps to protect yourself and others](#).

If you test negative for COVID-19 with an antigen test and have COVID-19 symptoms, you do not have an accurate diagnosis and you should request a PCR test.

7. Can someone test negative and then test positive?

Yes, it is possible. With the PCR test, you may test negative if the sample was collected early in your infection and test positive later during this illness. You could also be exposed to COVID-19

after the test and get infected then. With the antigen test, you may test negative, even if you are infected. You could then test positive with a PCR test or with a repeat of the antigen test.

8. Do I need to report if I have a positive test?

If you test positive and are an NKU employee, you need to notify your supervisor that you will have to quarantine. If you are a student, then you need to notify the Director of Health Services (Rose Tempel). However, in both cases, you are not required to reveal the reasons for your self-quarantining; how much information to reveal about your own situation is a personal decision based on your comfort level around sharing personal health information.

If you are an employee, your supervisor will notify the Chief Human Resource Officer (Lori Southwood) if you will be unable to work or if you will be off campus for an extended period of time. If you are a student, the Director of Health Services will notify the Vice President for Student Affairs that you are in quarantine and that person will in turn notify your instructors or supervisors if you will be unable to attend class or be on campus for an extended period.

There is a chance that the Health Department might contact Human Resources or Student Affairs to get more information regarding your locations on campus during the periods in which you might have been shedding the virus.

If you are a student, and need to quarantine in campus housing, you should contact the Director of Health Services about this, and she will work with you to begin that process. In order to quarantine through Campus Housing, additional personnel on campus will have to be informed of that fact so that appropriate arrangements for food and cleaning can be arranged.

If you have been advised to quarantine, you will need to provide documentation from your healthcare provider showing that you have been cleared to come back to campus prior to returning. This documentation should be given either to the Chief Human Resources Officer if you are faculty or staff or to the Director of Health Services if you are a student.

All of these procedures are governed by NKU's Communicable Disease Policy [[linked](#)]. NKU will follow all HIPAA guidelines regarding protecting personal health information.

9. What will happen if someone in my classroom (or office) tests positive?

All tests results are automatically reported to the district health department associated with your home address. If you took a test for COVID-19 on campus, then the Director of Health Services is required to report the positive result to the Northern Kentucky Health Department if it has not already been reported by the testing agency. The Health Department will follow up with contact tracing and notifications of relevant persons regarding potential exposure.

If the Health Department has reason to believe that you have been exposed, the department will get in contact with you and advise you of the correct procedures to follow, which may or may not include getting tested for COVID-19 or quarantining. What the Health Department will advise you to do will depend on the unique circumstances of your possible exposure. If there is

no reason to believe that you have been exposed, then you will not be notified of any positive test outcomes. These procedures are governed by NKU's Communicable Disease Policy [\[linked\]](#). NKU will follow all HIPAA guidelines regarding protecting personal health information.