

COVID-19 FAQ

What is COVID-19 and how is it spread?

- COVID-19, the common name for *SARS-CoV-2*, is a virus spread through close contact with other people (e.g., droplets when someone sneezes) and touching contaminated surfaces then touching your eyes, nose, or mouth

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

- **Common symptoms:** cough, fever, chills, body aches, shortness of breath, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell, congestion, runny nose, or diarrhea
- **Asymptomatic:** you have the virus but never develop symptoms
- **Pre-symptomatic:** you have the virus but eventually develop symptoms

Who is at risk of serious illness from COVID-19?

- People over **65 years old**; risk increases with age
- People who live in a long term care facility
- People who are **immunocompromised** or have underlying medical conditions including: chronic lung disease, moderate to severe asthma, serious heart conditions, severe obesity, diabetes, chronic kidney disease, sickle cell disease, and liver disease

Can asymptomatic and pre-symptomatic people spread COVID-19 to others?

- Yes. Research indicates asymptomatic and pre-symptomatic people may carry an equal amount of the virus (viral load) as symptomatic people, and therefore are contagious

Why is it important to wear masks or face coverings?

- Research indicates use of cloth face coverings reduces the risk of COVID-19 transmission, especially from the wearer to others
- The CDC recommends wearing **cloth face coverings** in public settings where social distancing measures are difficult to maintain

What is contact tracing?

- Process by which people exposed to an active COVID-19 case are identified and asked to **self-isolate to prevent spread** of the virus (e.g., interviews to assess recent movements and identify potentially exposed persons)

What is a “box-in” strategy?

- Process of testing, isolating, tracing, and quarantining individuals with COVID-19 form the corners of a “**box**” that stops an outbreak from spreading in a community

DISCLAIMER

The contents of this FAQ are not medical advice and should not be treated as a substitute for direct communication with a medical professional. If you have any questions or concerns, you should contact a medical professional.



Why is it important to test broadly for COVID-19?

- To save lives of Missourians
- To determine who is infected with COVID-19 so they can self-quarantine and not spread the virus
- To contact trace people who test positive and help isolate those who have been exposed or “box-in” potential outbreaks
- To understand the spread of the virus and determine communities most at-risk

Why do we test people who don't feel sick?

- Up to 50% of infected people don't feel sick, and therefore don't know they could spread the disease
- Broad testing helps identify anyone with the virus, who can then self-quarantine so as not to infect others

What is a PCR (diagnostic) test?

- A test to diagnose active viral infections by detecting the presence of viral RNA in a sample
 - Most PCR samples are still taken from where the nasal cavity meets the back of the mouth
 - Self-collected mid-nasal swabs are now available in Missouri
 - Certain PCR tests use saliva samples or cheek swabs, but these are not yet widely available
- Stands for “polymerase chain reaction”

What is Sentinel Testing?

- Disease surveillance system wherein certain populations are tested, so epidemiological information can be obtained
- Method of identifying trends in disease spread and therefore containing potential outbreaks

What is an antigen test?

- A test to diagnose active viral infections by detecting the presence of **protein fragments** found on or inside the virus
 - Antigen tests provide more rapid results and are cheaper than PCR tests
 - Antigen tests have more false negative results because they are less sensitive than PCR tests
- The *CDC recommends antigen testing only for symptomatic patients* in clinical settings
 - A PCR test may be ordered by a clinician if COVID-19 is suspected and the antigen result is negative

What is a serological (antibody) test?

- A test to detect COVID-19 antibodies in the bloodstream, indicating previous exposure to the virus
- It is unknown at this time whether the presence of antibodies indicates immunity to COVID-19
- Used for disease surveillance and research (e.g., determining prevalence of exposure to the virus in a particular population)

What is Prevalence Testing?

- Prevalence is the proportion of the population that has COVID-19 during a given time period.
- Prevalence testing is a scientific study where researchers randomly select a representative sample of the population and test those subjects to determine the spread of the virus among the population during the designated time period

What does it mean if I have a positive test result? If you have a positive test result, it is very likely that you have COVID-19. Therefore, it is also likely that you may be **placed in isolation to avoid spreading the virus** to others.