

What If I Need to Be Tested for COVID-19

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COVID-19, also called coronavirus, is a virus that is spreading quickly around the world and making some people sick. If you are suspected of being exposed to the virus or start showing symptoms, you may need to be tested for COVID-19. The test for COVID-19 is a quick swab that is inserted up your nose and then sent to a laboratory for testing.

Setting up a Test:

You must call a doctor before receiving a COVID-19 test. Some tests are given in the doctor's office or hospital. Sometimes, tests can be administered while you are in the car at a drive through testing site. Some hospitals have established testing tents outside their buildings so that people can be tested without exposing others in the hospital who might get very sick.

The test for COVID-19 is a nasopharyngeal swab. The swab looks like a long Q-tip. The swab is inserted into your nose and a sample is collected by twisting the swab. The swab is then submitted to a laboratory to check for indicators of the virus.

What to Expect from the Test:

If you go to a testing site, you will be expected to wear a mask. The doctor or nurse administering the swab will be wearing a mask, gloves, face shield, and gown. This is because they test many people during a day and do not want to pass on the virus. They will ask you to blow your nose to clear your nasal passages. You will tip your head back. The doctor will insert the swab into one nostril. The swab goes far back until the doctor touches your nasopharyngeal wall near the back of your throat. The doctor twists the swab to collect a sample. This does not hurt, but can be uncomfortable since you are not used to having things up your nose. Your eyes may start to water. You are encouraged to breathe gently and think of relaxing thoughts. The test is quick – about 10 seconds. The doctor will take the swab and put it into a sealed plastic tube or bag. This sample will be sent to a laboratory for pathologists to test for the virus.

After the Test:

After the test, it is important to keep on maintaining social distance, washing your hands, and taking care of yourself. You will learn results in 2-3 days. You want to be careful to not risk infecting others. If you test positive for COVID-19, it means that you have the virus. You will need to quarantine for 14 days, keep your distance from people, rest, and drink lots of fluids. Most people recover from COVID-19 at home on their own. People who are elderly or have compromised immune systems might have a harder time fighting off the virus. If you test negative for COVID-19, it is just as important to keep staying safe and healthy.

For More Information:

If you want more information, the CDC is the most reputable source for information regarding COVID-19. CDC stands for Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. There is a whole section of their website dedicated to COVID-19 at www.cdc.gov. Be aware that there is a lot of information about COVID-19 in the media but not all of it is correct. Defer to CDC for your information.