OAKLAND
COUNTY MICHIGAN
HEALTH DIVISION
DAVID COULTER
OAKLAND COUNTY EXECUTIVE

CORONAVIRUS COVID-19 | **TEST METHODS**

Updated 8/3/22

Molecular Test

Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test is the standard test for COVID-19 infection, recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). This type of test looks for SARS-CoV-2 viral RNA in the upper respiratory tract, collected using a "swab."

If you test positive using the Molecular Test, you should self-isolate until the following three things happen (refer to current Isolation Guidance):

1. No fever for 24 hours without fever reducing medicine
2. Symptoms improved
3. At least 5 full days have passed since symptoms first started OR the positive test was done, whichever came first

Even if you had COVID-19 and recovered, this test may continue to be positive for weeks afterward. See our guidelines for when it is safe to be around others.

False negative results are possible. If the level of virus present is low due to being tested very early or very late in your illness, levels of the virus may not be high enough to be detected by this test. If you have been exposed and have symptoms, but your test was negative, consider re-testing a couple days after your first test.

Michigan Department of Health and Human Services has published guidelines for At-Home COVID-19 Testing.

Antigen Test

Antigen tests look for certain proteins specific to SARS-CoV-2 virus in the upper respiratory tract. Faster and less expensive than molecular (PCR) tests, antigen tests are useful in screening and surveillance testing for the virus; however, they are less sensitive than PCR tests, and it may be necessary to confirm some antigen test results (a negative test in persons with symptoms or a positive test in persons without symptoms) with a laboratory-based molecular test. Proper interpretation of antigen test results is important for accurate clinical management of patients with suspected COVID-19. (CDC Guidance)

At home COVID-19 tests are generally antigen tests.

For more information about COVID19 tests,
visit https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/testing-overview.html