



Do I need a COVID PCR test?



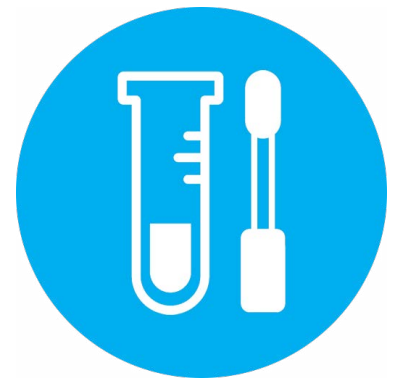
The high number of people with COVID in Ontario means that we have had to change how we use tests to confirm infection.

Most people with COVID symptoms no longer need a PCR test. If you have COVID symptoms, assume you have COVID.

What is a PCR test?

A Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test detects COVID genetic material. It is the most reliable test for detecting the virus.

COVID PCR tests are usually done by a trained health professional at an assessment centre, pharmacy or clinic. Using a swab, a sample is taken from deep inside your nostril. In some cases, you can test yourself with a PCR kit, collecting samples from your saliva or inside your mouth and nostrils. The samples are taken to a lab, clinic or hospital and the results are usually available in 24 hours or more.



As of December 31, 2021, PCR tests in Ontario can be used only for:

- » People in locations where the risk of spreading COVID is high – those who live, work, volunteer, visit, or are admitted to settings such as hospitals, long-term care homes, shelters, prisons and within First Nation, Inuit, and Métis communities.
- » People who are underhoused or homeless.
- » Students and staff in schools that provide kits.
- » People who face a higher risk of COVID causing serious illness or death and who may qualify for new COVID treatments.



Talk with your family doctor about treatment, if you have COVID symptoms and:

- » A very weak immune system. Examples include:
 - ✓ Active cancer treatments
 - ✓ Having had an organ or stem-cell transplants
 - ✓ Rare genetic disorders like DiGeorge Syndrome that impair your immune system
 - ✓ Advanced or untreated HIV
 - ✓ Medications that weaken the immune system including antimetabolites like methotrexate, biologic drugs (often ending in 'mab', 'mib', or 'nib'), and high-dose steroids (Prednisone 20mg or higher)
- » Are over 60
- » Are over 50 and Indigenous
- » Are over 50 AND have any of these issues:
 - ✓ Diabetes
 - ✓ Serious kidney problems
 - ✓ Obesity
 - ✓ Intellectual disability
 - ✓ Cerebral palsy
 - ✓ Sickle cell disease

Testing centres and emergency rooms will not provide a COVID test if you do not qualify.

The PCR test is very sensitive; even after recovering, you can test positive for several weeks.

Remember, if you have symptoms of COVID, assume you have COVID. For more information see rebrand.ly/Feeling-Unwell.

If you think you qualify for a PCR test, this website can help find a COVID testing centre near you: <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/assessment-centre-locations/>

For information on how to use Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs), see rebrand.ly/Using-RATs.