



Do I need a COVID PCR test?



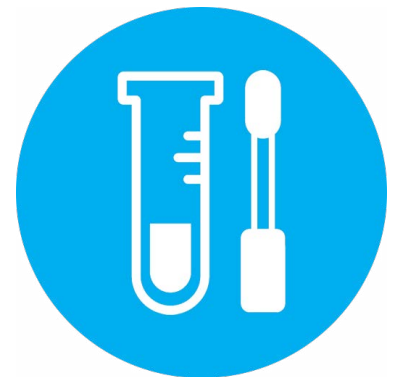
The high number of people with COVID in Ontario means that we have had to change how we use tests to confirm infection.

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 January 13, 2022, 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 and shelters — and household members of people who work in these settings
- » People living in or visiting First Nation, Inuit and Métis communities
- » Pregnant people, first responders, people who are underhoused or homeless and temporary foreign workers living in a shared space
- » Students and staff in schools where kits are provided
- » People who face a higher risk of COVID causing serious illness or death and who may qualify for new COVID treatments

CONFUSED ABOUT COVID? FAMILY DOCTORS ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS.

Some people with COVID may benefit from medications that reduce their risk of serious illness. In most cases, doctors can write a prescription without a PCR test to confirm COVID, but some situations require a test.

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

- » A very weak immune system. People often have very weak immune systems from:
 - ✓ 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 helps you find nearby COVID testing centres: <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/assessment-centre-locations/>

A complete list of who qualifies for testing is available at: rebrand.ly/MoH-Contact-Management

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