Viral tests for COVID-19 are tests for current infection to find out if you have COVID-19 now. Viral tests for COVID-19 check samples from your respiratory system (such as swabs of the inside of the nose).

**WHAT DOES A POSITIVE TEST MEAN?**
- A positive test means you have COVID-19 now.
- You should stay home (isolate) and separate yourself from others until you meet the criteria to end isolation. For most people, this means at least 10 days have passed since their symptoms began (or since their positive test if they never had symptoms), they have not had a fever for at least 24 hours without fever-reducing medication, and their symptoms have improved.

**WHAT DOES A NEGATIVE TEST MEAN?**
- A negative test means you were not infected with COVID-19 at the time your specimen was collected.
- A negative test does not mean that you will not get sick.
- It is possible that you were very early in your infection when your sample was collected and that you could test positive later.
- You could also be exposed later and then develop illness.
- Take steps to protect yourself and others (see the next page).
- If you were tested because of close contact with someone with COVID-19, you still need to quarantine for 14 days after your last close contact with the person with COVID-19. Count your date of last exposure as Day 0.
  - If you are unable to stay home for 14 days and you do not have symptoms, you may leave home after Day 10; OR you may leave home after Day 7 with a negative PCR or antigen test performed on or after Day 5.
- If you were tested because of close contact, you might not be required to stay home if you have recovered from COVID-19 or been fully vaccinated for COVID-19. You should still monitor your symptoms for 14 days and continue to wear a mask and watch your distance (with some exceptions for fully vaccinated people), avoid crowds, and wash your hands. See www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus/local-exposure/ for more information.
**TO PROTECT YOURSELF AND OTHERS FROM COVID-19:**

- If you feel sick, stay home and isolate yourself from other people in your household. Do not go to work or school.
- Maintain at least 6 feet of distance from people who are not members of your household.*
- Avoid crowds and large gatherings.
- **Wear a mask** correctly (both indoors and outdoors) when around people who do not live with you.*
- Clean your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily.
- Get the COVID-19 vaccine when it is your turn. Vaccine supply is limited at first, and priority will go to people at highest risk.

* With some exceptions for fully vaccinated people

**WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE SICK:**

- Stay home except to get medical care. Do not go to work or school.
- Separate yourself from other people in your home. Try to use a separate bedroom and bathroom from other people in your home.
- Get tested. Contact your healthcare provider or see [Virginia COVID-19 Testing Sites](#).
- Call ahead before visiting your doctor.
- **Wear a mask** correctly when you are around other people.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue. Throw away tissues immediately.
- Clean your hands often. Use soap and water for 20 seconds or hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid sharing personal household items (like dishes, drinking glasses, utensils, towels, or bedding) with other people in your home.
- Clean and disinfect all “high-touch” surfaces daily (like phones, remote controls, counters, tabletops, doorknobs, and toilets).
- Monitor your symptoms every day.

**VDH**

**VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

Updated 3/12/2021

Call 9–1–1 if you have a medical emergency. If you have a medical emergency and need to call 9–1–1, notify the operator that you have or think you might have COVID–19.