UNDERSTANDING COVID-19 TESTING

TESTING FOR THE VIRUS

SAMPLE COLLECTION

A swab is taken from the inside of the nose or back of the throat.

PROCESSING

Molecular tests detect whether there is genetic material from the virus.

POSITIVE TEST RESULT

TRUE POSITIVE

You are currently infected. Almost all positive results are true positives.

FALSE POSITIVE

You are not infected, but test positive (very rare).

NEGATIVE TEST RESULT

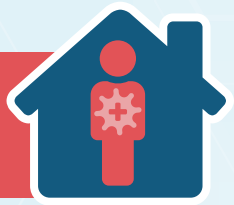
TRUE NEGATIVE

You are not currently infected. There is no risk of infecting others.

FALSE NEGATIVE

You are infected, but test negative. Can happen when the test is done too early to detect the disease or when sample collection is poor.

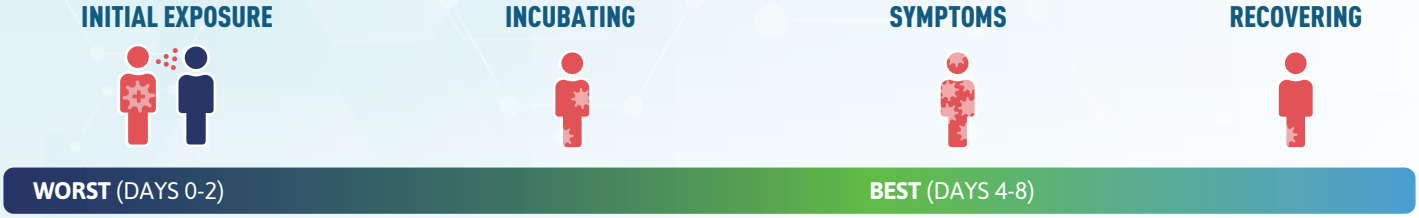
POSITIVE TEST RESULT
INDIVIDUAL ISOLATES



FALSE NEGATIVE TEST RESULT
UNAWARE OF THEIR INFECTION AND COULD INFECT OTHERS

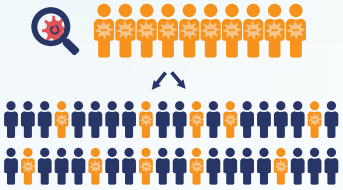
TESTING ACCURACY DEPENDS ON WHEN YOU GET TESTED

Test accuracy based on a 5 day incubation period from exposure to symptoms



Days 0-2
Very low virus

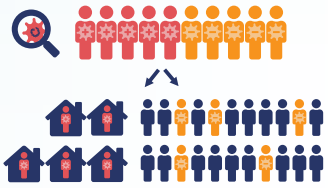
~98% not detected*



Those tested too early will be unaware of infection and may infect others.

Days 0-5
Virus multiplying

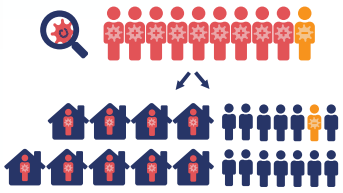
~50% not detected*



Up to half of those tested will get a false negative result and may infect others.

Days 5+
Virus plentiful

~10% not detected*



Low false negative rate.

Days 15+
Virus decreasing

May not be infectious to others

May take longer to recover from severe disease

* Based on preliminary data and expert opinion. Some do not develop symptoms. Test accuracy for asymptomatic cases is unclear as it is not known where they are in the disease timeline.

TESTING FOR ANTIBODIES

A blood test detects antibodies to the virus that usually start to appear when a person is recovering.
This blood test is not used to diagnose active COVID-19.

Research is underway to find out whether antibodies protect you from future infections.

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