## Testing for COVID-19

### What happens when you get infected with SARS-CoV-2?

The virus enters the body and infection may result in COVID-19. The person may or may not have symptoms. The specialised cells of the immune system help fight infection by producing antibodies that precisely match the invading viral antigen, which is a unique feature of the virus.

After the infection is cleared, protective antibodies can remain in the body to fight future infections with SARS-CoV-2.

### How does testing work?

#### PCR testing
- **The test uses...**
  - Swabs from the nose and throat
- **The samples are tested...**
  - in a lab to identify the presence of SARS-CoV-2 genetic material.
- **The test tells us...**
  - who currently has an infection.
- **When should the test be taken?**
  - When symptoms are present; as required for travel.
- **The test result will likely be positive...**
  - during an active infection when the virus is in the body even if the person has no symptoms.

#### Rapid lateral flow testing
- **The test uses...**
  - Swabs from the nose and/or throat mixed with a solution
- **The samples are tested...**
  - at home using a hand-held device to identify the presence of specific SARS-CoV-2 antigen.
- **The test tells us...**
  - who currently has an infection.
- **When should the test be taken?**
  - Regularly when you don’t have symptoms; if you’ve been in close contact with someone with COVID-19; to end self-isolation; as required for travel.
- **The test result will likely be positive...**
  - during an active infection when the virus is in the body even if the person has no symptoms.

#### Antibody testing
- **The test uses...**
  - Blood sample
- **The samples are tested...**
  - in a lab to identify any antibodies present that match and bind to the viral antigen.
- **The test tells us...**
  - who has previously been infected with SARS-CoV-2 or made antibodies after having the COVID-19 vaccine.
- **When should the test be taken?**
  - After an infection has been cleared. If available and offered, after a positive PCR test; as part of a screening programme or research study.
- **The test result will likely be positive...**
  - from 7–10 days after an infection or vaccination, and for several months after.

### Time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Virus presence</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Antibody presence</th>
<th>Time after vaccination or infection</th>
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