

COVID-19 Home Test Kits: Frequently Asked Questions



This information will answer common questions about the use of COVID-19 home test kits, as well as support you with managing your test results, self-isolation, and symptom monitoring to prevent the spread of COVID-19 to others. This information is based on guidance from the NH Department of Health & Human Services and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

General Questions:

1) What are COVID-19 home test kits?

COVID-19 home test kits are diagnostic tests, approved by the [FDA with Emergency Use Authorization](#), that individuals can purchase over the counter and administer themselves to test for the COVID-19 antigen. Sometimes referred to as “self-test” or “at-home test”. It is important to read and follow the manufacturer’s instructions before using any COVID-19 home test kit.

2) Who should use a home test kit?

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), COVID-19 home test kits can be used at home by individuals who:

- are experiencing COVID-19 [symptoms](#)
- have been in close contact (known [exposure](#)) with someone with COVID-19 to help monitor for illness

The CDC defines an “[exposure](#)” to be anyone that was less than 6 feet away from an infected person (laboratory-confirmed or a clinical diagnosis) for a cumulative total of 10 minutes or more over a 24-hour period.

Individuals who have had COVID-19 in the past 90 days should consult with their primary care provider about testing if they experience new or worsening symptoms.

For additional guidance on self-testing, see the questions below or visit the CDC website (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/testing/self-testing.html>)

Quick Reference Guide For Exposures (From CDC):

- People who are unvaccinated or not fully vaccinated should [quarantine](#) and get tested immediately after being identified as a close contact. If the test is negative, they should get tested again 5–7 days after last exposure and continue to quarantine. If [symptoms](#) develop during quarantine, they should [isolate](#) and get tested immediately.
- People who are [fully vaccinated](#) should get tested 5–7 days after coming into close contact with someone with COVID-19 and wear a mask indoors in public for 14 days or until they test negative. If [symptoms](#) develop, they should [isolate](#) and get tested immediately.

- People who have had COVID-19 within the past 90 days and recovered should wear a mask indoors in public for 14 days after exposure, monitor for symptoms, and consult with a healthcare professional for testing recommendations if they develop new symptoms

NH DHHS COVID Exposure Resources:

<https://www.covid19.nh.gov/resources/what-do-if-you-were-exposed-covid-19>

3) When should I perform a home test kit?

Individuals experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 can test at any point, but for the most accurate results should test within 5 days of symptom onset.

Individuals with a known exposure to someone with COVID-19, regardless of whether they have symptoms or are vaccinated, should be tested 5–7 days following the exposure and wear a mask in public indoor settings for 14 days after exposure. When the exposure is a household contact, a test is also recommended at time of notification of a household contact.

Individuals who have had COVID-19 in the past 90 days should consult with their primary care provider about testing if they experience new or worsening symptoms.

4) How do I get COVID-19 home test kits?

You can find home test kits at pharmacies and retail stores. Some stores are offering online ordering.

- **Can I purchase home test kits through the Elliot Health System?**

You cannot purchase a COVID-19 home test kit through your primary care office. The Elliot Health System does sell home test kits at their retail pharmacy as stock is available.

- **Can I get more test kits from the state?**

Check the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services website to see if they are offering additional free home test kits.

<https://www.covid19.nh.gov/>.

- **How do I get my insurance company to pay for home test kits?**

At this time, private insurance companies are not required to cover at home test kits, however, that may change in 2022.

What to do with your results?

If you test POSITIVE:

1) Do I need to report my positive test result to my primary care provider or the State of New Hampshire?

All positive results should be reported to the State of New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (NH DHHS). You can report your results using the following link: safercovid.org/mytest. Reporting your positive result is important as it helps us with tracking the overall health of the state in order to assess the ongoing needs as the community works to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Your primary care provider is not able to communicate positive test results from a home test kit to the State of New Hampshire. It is important to share your positive test result with your primary care provider at your next appointment. Be sure to make note of when you tested positive and share that with your primary care provider at your next visit so that your record can be updated.

2) Do I need a lab test to confirm my positive results?

You do not need a lab test to confirm an at-home positive result. Contact your primary care provider if your symptoms are worsening, you feel you need to be seen, or if you don't believe your test results are accurate. If you feel like your symptoms are life-threatening, please call 911.

3) If I test positive, how long do I need to isolate for? And when does it start?

If you have tested positive, regardless of your vaccination status, to avoid spreading the virus to others, follow the [Self-Isolation Guidelines](#) from the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services following your positive test result.

4) Who else do I need to share my positive test result with?

Be sure to let your family or household contacts know immediately of your positive test result. A person with COVID-19 can begin spreading it starting 48 hours (or 2 days) before they have any symptoms or test positive.

If possible, you should also communicate your COVID-19 illness with anyone you were in close contact starting 48 hours before your first symptom or, if you don't have any symptoms, 48 hours before your positive test result.

5) What precautions do my family or household contacts need to take?

- If your family or household contacts are fully vaccinated they should follow the [Self-Observation Guidelines](#) put forth by the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services.
- Non-vaccinated or partially vaccinated family or household contacts should follow the [Self-Quarantine Guidelines](#) put forth by the New Hampshire Department of Human Health Services.

6) What precautions can I take to protect my family or household contacts?

Recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) for protecting your household contacts include:

- using a separate bathroom if possible
- not sharing any personal household items, like cups, towels, and utensils
- staying in a specific room and away from other people and pets in your home or place of residence
- wearing a mask if you need to be around other people or animals in or outside of the home or place of residence

7) How do I get a letter for myself or dependent indicating stay at home instructions and when it is safe to return to work, school or daycare?

Most employers, schools, and daycares are accepting pictures of you home test kits as proof of negative or positive results without a note from a healthcare provider. Be sure to take pictures of your results with the date visible in the photo. Please reach out to your organization to understand their requirements for return.

After confirming your organizations requirements, if you need a letter indicating when you or your child can return to work, school or daycare, please send a message to your primary care provider through MyChart. You will need to provide us with the date you completed your home test and the result.

If you don't already have a MyChart account, please go to mychart.solutionhealth.org and follow the New User prompts to sign up now.

If you test NEGATIVE:

1.) What does a negative result mean?

A negative test result means that the test did not detect the virus and you may not have a COVID-19 infection, but it doesn't rule it out.

2.) Do I need to report a negative test result to my primary care provide or the State of New Hampshire?

All negative results should also be reported to the State of New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (NH DHHS). You can report your results using the following link: safercovid.org/mytest. Reporting your negative result is important as it helps us with tracking the overall health of the state in order to assess the ongoing needs as the community works to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

There is no need to report your negative result to your primary care provider. If your symptoms are worsening, you feel you need to be seen or if you don't believe your test results are accurate contact your primary care provider to discuss next steps. If you feel like your symptoms are life-threatening, please call 911.

3.) Do I need to retest using another home test kit? If so when?

You should consider retesting if the suspicion of COVID-19 is high. Retesting should occur 24-48 hours after the initial testing.

4.) Do I need a lab test to confirm my results?

You do not need a lab test to confirm your negative test result unless it is required by your place of work, school, or daycare for returning. Every institution's requirements for return may be different.

If you don't believe your test results are accurate, reach out to your primary care provider to discuss getting a PCR test at one of our facilities, at a local pharmacy, or at one of the [state's sponsored testing locations](#).

5.) Do I still need to monitor for symptoms or quarantine? If so, for how long?

- **Fully Vaccinated Individual with Known Exposure (Symptomatic or Not):**
If you are fully vaccinated and administered the home test kit to monitor for COVID-19 related to a recent exposure, you should continue to monitor for symptoms and follow the [Self-Observation Guidelines](#) put forth by the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services.

- **Fully Vaccinated Individual with No Known Exposure:**
Regular preventative measures and self-monitor for worsening or continued symptom.
- **Non-Vaccinated or Partially Vaccinated Individual Known Exposure (Symptomatic or Not):**

If the exposure was a household contact continue to follow the [Quarantine Guidelines](#) put forth by the NH Department of Health and Human Services.

If the exposure was a non-household contact continue to follow the [Self-Observation Guidelines](#) put forth by the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services.
- **Non-Vaccinated or Partially Vaccinated Individual with No Known Exposure but Symptomatic:**
Call your primary care provider to discuss next steps.

6.) What do I do if I develop new symptoms?

If you develop new symptoms or experience changes in your symptoms you should:

- i. Call 911 if your symptoms are life-threatening
- ii. Test immediately using a home test kit if available or by scheduling an appointment at your primary care practice, at a local pharmacy, urgent care center, or at one of the [state's sponsored testing locations](#).
- iii. Contact your primary care provider if your symptoms are worsening, you feel you need to be seen, or if you don't believe your test results are accurate.

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Invalid Results:

8) What do I do if I get an invalid result?

Invalid test results are rare but can occur. If the self-test shows an invalid result or a test error, the test did not work properly. If this happens, refer to the instructions for use in the package insert and test again. If the second test fails, contact the manufacturer for assistance or utilize a different type of test.