

Facts & DETAILS

COVID-19 Tests

SARS-CoV-2 is the virus that causes COVID-19. There are three kinds of COVID-19 tests: viral, antibody, and antigen tests. Viral and antigen tests detect a current infection. Antibody tests detect current or past infection.

Viral Test (also called Molecular/PCR Test)

This is the most common test for COVID-19. The viral test detects the genetic material from the coronavirus to diagnose active infection.

A sample of mucus is taken from your nose or throat or saliva can be collected in a tube. The test uses a technology called PCR (polymerase chain reaction) that will amplify the viral genetic material, if a person is infected. A positive test means the person is infected. This testing can produce false negatives if the sample is not collected correctly, but these are rare.

Most often, specimens are delivered to a laboratory where results are received in three to seven days. Some facilities use a small instrument that produces rapid results in as quickly as 13 minutes. More information on this type of testing can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/testing/diagnostic-testing.html>.

Antibody Test (also called Serology Test)

An antibody test is a blood test that detects antibodies against SARS-CoV-2. The body produces these antibodies to help fight off the virus after infection. These tests are also called serology tests.

Positive antibody test results may show whether a person was infected with SARS-CoV-2 at some point. Some tests produce high numbers of false positive results, especially in areas with low numbers of COVID-19 cases. However, even with accurate antibody tests, it is unknown if the presence of antibodies protects a person from future infection and how long that protection could last.

Antibody tests have received Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) but

are not officially approved. More information on FDA approval of antibody tests can be found at <https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/emergency-situations-medical-devices/faqs-diagnostic-testing-sars-cov-2>. More information on antibody/serology testing can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/testing/serology-overview.html>.

Antigen Test

Approved in May 2020, the antigen test is the newest COVID-19 test. It identifies proteins on the surface of the coronavirus in nose or throat secretions to detect active infection. Like antibody testing, the antigen test has been granted EUA by the FDA but is not officially approved.

Results can be provided in two to three minutes. Positive results tend to be accurate but false negatives occur. At this time, these tests can be used to screen people in hospitals, certain workplaces, or other instances when a quick result is needed. If you have a positive result, your healthcare provider may recommend you get a PCR test to confirm infection.

What testing does the Sedgwick County Health Department (SCHD) offer?

The SCHD collects nasopharyngeal (nose), oropharyngeal (throat), or a saliva sample from residents and sends to a laboratory for COVID-19 testing. Residents can access no-cost testing by SCHD at the walk-in/bike-in K-State Research and Extension Center, 7001 W 21st, North, Wichita. Hours are 8:30 - 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 - 4:30 p.m., Monday to Friday, first come, first serve. At this time, SCHD is not offering antibody and antigen tests.

For More Information:

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