COVID-19 PATIENT TESTING INFORMATION

Most people with COVID-19 infection have a short illness with fever, cough and sore throat. Some lose their sense of smell and/or taste and some have trouble breathing. The infection can be passed to others by coughing or sneezing and by direct contact. It is important to wear a face covering when leaving your home to help protect yourself and prevent spread of the illness. **The COVID-19 nasal swab test detects the actual virus that causes COVID-19 infection.**

What does it mean if I have a positive test result?

If you have a positive result on the nasal swab test, it means that you have likely been infected with the COVID-19 virus.

What does it mean if I have a negative result?

If you have a negative result on the nasal swab test, it means that either you have not been infected with the COVID-19 virus or that you have been infected with the COVID-19 virus but the test was unable to detect the virus. We are still learning about the COVID-19 virus and about this test.

What should I do if I have a positive test result?

You should stay home for at least seven days with the last three days being without fever (while not taking fever-reducing medicines like acetaminophen or ibuprofen) and with your symptoms improving. If your symptoms get worse or you develop trouble breathing, call 911. You do not need to repeat the test once your symptoms improve or resolve as the test may stay positive past the point that you are still infectious.

If anyone in your household has had direct contact with you, they should monitor their temperature and look for symptoms such as fever, cough or sore throat for 14 days. They should avoid public spaces and transportation and not come in contact with individuals who are elderly, have chronic medical conditions or are immunocompromised.

What should I do if I have a negative test result?

If you do not have any symptoms, there is no need for home isolation. Continue to practice regular precautions like washing your hands regularly and wearing a face covering when outdoors.

If you have symptoms, even with a negative test, you should stay home for at least seven days with the last three days being without fever (while not taking fever-reducing medicines like acetaminophen or ibuprofen) and with your symptoms improving. If your symptoms get worse or you develop trouble breathing, call 911. If anyone in your household has had direct contact with you, they should monitor their temperature and look for symptoms such as fever, cough or sore throat for 14 days. They should avoid public spaces and transportation and not come in contact with individuals who are elderly, have chronic medical conditions or are immunocompromised.

If you have additional questions, contact your regular doctor. If you do not have a regular doctor, you can call the NYC Health + Hospitals Contact Center at 1-844-NYC-4NYC (1-844-692-4692).

Stay Well. Stay Safe.
NYC Health + Hospitals Office of Ambulatory Care