

Frequently Asked Questions

NYC Test & Trace Program Overview

What is the NYC Test & Trace Corps?

A public health initiative fighting COVID-19. Through FREE resources and action, the NYC Test & Trace Corps aims to contain the COVID-19 outbreak and protect our city. Officially launched on June 1, 2020, the NYC Test & Trace Corps is a group of doctors, public health professionals, and community advocates working to fight COVID-19 so that we all can get back to school and work, and help keep New York City healthy and safe.

The work of the Corps is led by NYC Health + Hospitals in close collaboration with the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and other city agencies.

What is the goal of the Test & Trace Corps?

The Corps aims to keep New Yorkers safe by reducing the spread of the virus and helping those with confirmed COVID-19 disease separate safely from others and protect their loved ones. There are three key components of the work of the Corps:

Test

Confidential and safe COVID-19 testing is available at no cost to all New Yorkers at hundreds of testing sites across the City.

Trace

Trace's goal is to identify people who may have been exposed to the disease through close contact and help them find the best place to safely separate from others. With the help of thousands of trained public health professionals called Contact Tracers, this effort will provide support to New Yorkers who test positive for COVID-19.

Take Care

Contact Tracers will make sure that everyone who tests positive for COVID-19 and their close contacts have the resources needed to safely separate in a hotel, free of charge, or at home. Hotels will have 24/7 monitoring by skilled nurses and clinicians, free wireless internet access, all meals provided, access to mental health and wellness support, and free unlimited local phone calls to stay connected to loved ones. For New Yorkers that choose to safely separate at home, the Take Care team will help them with access to food and medication delivery.

Who do I call if I have questions about the NYC Test & Trace Corps or COVID-19?

For questions about COVID-19, test site information, contact tracing and resources to protect yourself and your loved ones, call 212-COVID19 (212-268-4319). We have live operators available to answer your questions every day from 9 am to 9 pm.

How will the NYC Test & Trace Corps ensure the privacy and security of personal information?

The NYC Test & Trace Corps is committed to protecting the privacy and security of New Yorkers' personal health information as required by federal, state and local law and in keeping with the NYC Health + Hospitals' and the City Health Department's long-time experience in guarding such information. The information that the NYC Test & Trace Corps receives through contact tracing is confidential and protected under the New York City Health Code.

The NYC Test & Trace Corps will not ask about anyone's immigration status. The Corps database will not be linked to any law enforcement databases. Any information the NYC Test & Trace Corps obtains will be stored securely and used by authorized staff for the limited purpose of protecting public health.

Will anyone be considered a "public charge" under immigration law for receiving services from the Test & Trace Corps?

No. Getting tested, speaking with a Contact Tracer, or using a Take Care hotel to safely separate will not affect your ability to apply for permanent residency (green card). Additionally, medical treatment or preventive health care services related to COVID-19 will NOT be considered under the public charge rule.

How is the NYC Test & Trace Corps working to understand the diverse needs of New Yorkers, particularly communities most impacted by the virus?

The Corps is working to ensure that this effort is reflective of the diverse city it serves. Community groups provide advice and support to help us deliver effective, culturally appropriate services, and to address the needs of communities that have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, Contact Tracers are from NYC neighborhoods hardest hit by COVID-19.

In addition, through partnerships with over a dozen community-based organizations across the city, the NYC Test & Trace Corps is providing Resource Navigators to help New Yorkers overcome logistical issues they may encounter while safely separating in their homes such as access to food or medicine.

Test

Who can get tested?

All New Yorkers can get COVID-19 diagnostic testing and antibody testing at no cost. All New Yorkers should get the COVID-19 diagnostic test, even if they do not have symptoms.

Where can New Yorkers get tested?

There are hundreds of testing sites across the city, including at more than 30 NYC Health + Hospitals locations, at CityMD clinics, near NYCHA residences, at parks and recreational centers, and through mobile testing vans. To find a testing site near you, visit nyc.gov/covidtest or call 212-COVID19 (212-268-4319).

Should people get tested more than once?

Yes, everyone should get tested often to ensure the health and safety of themselves and their loved ones.

Will I need to pay for my test?

No, many testing sites offer COVID-19 tests at no cost. You do not need insurance to get a COVID-19 test or an antibody test at any NYC Health + Hospitals location. If you have insurance, it is important to share your insurance information so that the insurer can be billed. However, you will not need to pay any co-pay or co-insurance.

When and how will I receive my test results?

Your test results will be available within 3-5 days. While you are awaiting test results, it is important that you separate safely at home or in a hotel if you are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms or believe you may have been exposed to COVID-19.

Trace

What is tracing?

Tracing, also called contact tracing, involves finding people who tested positive or were exposed to COVID-19 and asking them to safely separate from other people until they can no longer spread the virus.

What is the role of a Contact Tracer?

Contact Tracers call people who test positive or have been exposed to COVID-19. A Contact Tracer will:

- + Ask how you are feeling
- + Ask if you need services and support to help you stay healthy and avoid spreading COVID-19
- + Explain how long you need to stay inside and away from other people
- + Ask questions to figure out how you may have been infected, if you have tested positive
- + Ask for names and contact information of people you had close contact with while you could have spread the virus to others, if you have tested positive

A Contact Tracer may also visit you in person to check on your wellbeing. They will show you their identification card to prove they are a Contact Tracer.

How does the NYC Test & Trace Corps get people's information?

If you were diagnosed with COVID-19, the NYC Test & Trace Corps received your information from the NYC Health Department. New York State law and the New York City Health Code require laboratories to send positive test results to the NYC Health Department. The NYC Health Department securely shared your information with the NYC Test & Trace Corps in compliance with privacy laws that allow this type of information to be used to protect public health and stop the spread of disease.

If you were exposed to COVID-19, the NYC Test & Trace Corps received your information because someone with COVID-19 told a Contact Tracer that you were in close contact with them, or you

were in a location where someone with COVID-19 may have exposed you. A Contact Tracer cannot tell you who told them you were a close contact.

How can New Yorkers know if the person calling is a Contact Tracer with the NYC Test & Trace Corps?

The NYC Test & Trace Corps Contact Tracers are working to call everyone who tested positive for, or were exposed to, the virus that causes COVID-19. Please answer the phone if you get a call from:

- + NYC Test+Trace
- + NYC Covid Test
- + A phone number beginning with 212-540-XXXX or 212-242-XXXX

You also can ask the person calling you to provide a code to enter into the “Validate My Tracer” tool. The tool will confirm the contact tracer’s name if the code is valid. Once a valid code has been used, it expires and cannot be re-used. To use the “Validate My Tracer” tool:

- + 1) Request a code from the person calling or visiting you.
- + 2) Visit testandtrace.nyc.gov.
- + 3) Select “Click Here to Validate My Tracer”.
- + 4) Enter the code.

A Contact Tracer will NEVER:

- + Ask for your name - they will know it when they call you
- + Ask for your Social Security number
- + Ask for any private financial information
- + Ask for credit card information
- + Ask to take control of or download software to your phone, tablet, or computer

A Contact Tracer may also visit you at home, especially if they cannot reach you by phone. They will show you their identification card to prove they are a Contact Tracer.

What is “close contact” with someone who tested positive for COVID-19?

Close contact is defined as:

- + Living with someone who tested positive for COVID-19
- + Kissing or having sex with someone who tested positive for COVID-19
- + Providing care in the home of someone who tested positive for COVID-19
- + Spending 10 minutes or more within six feet of someone who tested positive for COVID-19

Can my smartphone tell me if I was in close contact with someone who has COVID-19?

If you download and activate the COVID Alert NY app, you will get an alert if you were in close contact with someone who tests positive for COVID-19. The app will never collect, transmit or store your personal information and is completely anonymous. Your location will never be tracked; the app uses bluetooth technology to sense when another person with the same app comes within 6 feet. For more information, visit coronavirus.health.ny.gov/covid-alert-ny/.

I have COVID-19. How do I tell my close contacts that they were exposed?

Contact tracers will notify your close contacts that they were exposed to COVID-19 – but only if you share their name and contact information with your contact tracer. Your contact tracer will never tell your close contacts that you are the person who named them.

We recommend that you tell your close contacts that they were exposed to COVID-19 before a contact tracer reaches out to them, if you feel comfortable. You could say something like: “I was just diagnosed with COVID-19. Because we were in close contact while I could have spread the virus, you have been exposed. You should stay home and away from other people for 10 days since the last time we were together. If you cannot do that, call the NYC Test & Trace Corps Hotline at 212-COVID19 for information on free resources to help you safely separate, such as free food or a free hotel room. You can also call the hotline or visit nyc.gov/covidtest to find a testing location near you.”

Take Care

What type of assistance will New Yorkers receive when isolating at home?

All New Yorkers who are safely separating at home and monitoring their health status will get daily check-in calls or text messages from a Contact Tracer who may also conduct in-person visits to check on their wellbeing. The NYC Test & Trace Corps will also provide access to meals and medications.

How can New Yorkers access a free hotel room to safely isolate if they have tested positive for COVID-19?

You may be eligible for a free hotel stay of up to 10 days if you do not have a place to safely separate to protect your loved ones. To learn more, call 212-COVID19 (212-268-4319).

What services are available in a hotel?

New Yorkers who choose to safely separate in a hotel will have access to free transportation and 24/7 support by skilled nurses and clinicians, free meals, access to mental health and wellness services, wireless internet access, cable television, and free unlimited local phone calls to stay connected to loved ones. COVID-19 testing is also available on site at Take Care Hotels.

How can providers refer patients to hotels?

Any doctor, nurse, or physician assistant across the City can email CommCareCP@nychhc.org to refer a patient to a hotel room. If you do not have a doctor, you can call 212-COVID19 (212-268-4319), the NYC Test & Trace Hotline, to speak with someone who can help you make a reservation.

For more information about NYC Test & Trace, call 212-COVID19 (212-268-4319) or visit testandtrace.nyc