



COVID-19 Testing – Frequently Asked Questions

Q. If I have symptoms of COVID-19, why can't I get tested?

A. Based on the current shortage of test kits and/or testing supplies, hospitals must allocate testing where there will be the greatest benefit. This means that hospitalized patients will be tested to ensure that adequate precautions are taken to avoid spreading the virus to healthcare workers and other patients. It also means that the testing of healthcare workers and first responders will be prioritized in order to either confirm or rule out COVID-19. This allows these individuals to return to patient care and protecting the community as soon as they are cleared by a physician and public health officials. Testing criteria will be relaxed as soon as more supplies become available.

Q. Won't I get better treatment if my healthcare provider knows I've tested positive for the virus?

A. There are currently no approved medications to treat COVID-19 and the treatment options available are the same whether or not a person is tested. Doctors treat a patient based on symptoms and any resulting complications. If a doctor determines that a patient's symptoms require hospitalization, that person will be hospitalized regardless of whether or not they have received a positive COVID-19 test.

Q. I keep hearing that testing is the best way to find out where COVID-19 is spreading. How can we 'flatten the curve' if we don't know who has COVID-19?

A. This is true – testing everyone who exhibits symptoms of COVID-19, and then isolating those individuals and quarantining their close contacts, is the best tool we have right now to slow the spread of this virus. However, a lack of adequate testing supplies does not prevent us from taking these same steps. Anyone who believes they may be showing signs and symptoms of COVID-19 can, *and should*, remain home and self-isolate. They also should reach out to close contacts to encourage those individuals to take similar precautions.

Q. If I have COVID-19 symptoms, but don't meet the criteria to receive a test, what can I do?

A. Reach out to your primary care doctor as soon as possible and describe your symptoms. Follow all instructions provided. Your doctor will most likely ask you to self-isolate. If you do not have a primary care doctor, you should call your local hospital Emergency Department or the Essex County Health Department. For about 80 - 85% of cases, COVID-19 can be managed at home by monitoring symptoms, getting rest, and staying hydrated. If you begin to experience severe symptoms, like trouble breathing, pain or pressure in your chest, or confusion, get medical attention immediately by calling 9-1-1. Notify the dispatch personnel that you may have COVID-19. Refer to the attached informational sheet for more information about managing symptoms at home.

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Q. If I am self-isolating because I am experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, when is it safe for me to discontinue self-isolation?

A. It's always best to seek advice from your healthcare provider about when self-isolation can be discontinued. In general, individuals who were presumed sick with COVID-19 can safely discontinue self-isolation when at least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since recovery, which is defined as:

- No fever (without the use of fever-reducing medications); **and**
- Improvement of respiratory symptoms; **and**
- At least seven days have passed since symptoms first appeared

Additional COVID-19 information and resources are available at:

General Information

Essex County Health Department <https://www.co.essex.ny.us/Health/> and www.facebook.com/EssexCountyPublicHealth

New York State Department of Health <https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/home> or

NYS Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Hotline: 1-888-364-3065

CDC <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

Prevention & Preparing for Community Spread:

<https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/protect-yourself-and-your-family-coronavirus-covid-19#symptoms>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/index.html>

Groups at Higher Risk for Severe Illness:

<https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/protect-yourself-and-your-family-coronavirus-covid-19#symptoms>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/high-risk-complications.html>

What to do if you are Sick:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/index.html>

Paid Sick Leave:

<https://www.governor.ny.gov/programs/paid-sick-leave-covid-19-impacted-new-yorkers>

Schools, Workplaces & Community Locations:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/index.html>

10 ways to manage respiratory symptoms at home

If you have fever, cough, or shortness of breath, call your healthcare provider. They may tell you to manage your care from home. Follow these tips:

1. **Stay home** from work, school, and away from other public places. If you must go out, avoid using any kind of public transportation, ridesharing, or taxis.



2. **Monitor your symptoms** carefully. If your symptoms get worse, call your healthcare provider immediately.



3. **Get rest and stay hydrated.**



4. If you have a medical appointment, **call the healthcare provider** ahead of time and tell them that you have or may have COVID-19.



5. For medical emergencies, call 911 and **notify the dispatch personnel** that you have or may have COVID-19.



6. **Cover your cough and sneezes.**



7. **Wash your hands often** with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.



8. As much as possible, **stay** in a specific room and **away from other people** in your home. Also, you should use a separate bathroom, if available. If you need to be around other people in or outside of the home, wear a facemask.



9. **Avoid sharing personal items** with other people in your household, like dishes, towels, and bedding.



10. **Clean all surfaces** that are touched often, like counters, tabletops, and doorknobs. Use household cleaning sprays or wipes according to the label instructions.



For more information: www.cdc.gov/COVID19