



## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on Testing for COVID-19 in Riverside County

### 1. Why is testing for coronavirus important?

- a. Testing is important because it allows us to identify new cases and clusters of COVID-19 quickly to allow containment and slow the spread of disease. It also gives us a better understanding of how many people are currently infected in the county and specific geographic locations or groups with higher rates of infection. Understanding the amount and pattern of infection is important as we move towards safely reopening our community.

### 2. Should all individuals get tested, regardless of whether or not they are having symptoms of illness?

- a. Yes. Even if you don't have symptoms, you can be tested. You can be tested again even if you have been tested before. Part of the plan on safely opening the State of California as well as the County of Riverside relies on testing to see how the virus is affecting our community. As more people are tested, we will be able to see how the disease is progressing and affecting specific areas of our community.

### 3. Does testing help Riverside County reopen faster?

- a. Yes. Testing allows us to identify cases of disease in the community. If cases are rapidly identified, Public Health has a better chance to disrupt the spread of disease. Testing also allows us to identify who is not infected at a given point in time, which is also important information. As more people get tested, we can lower the incidence of disease and reopen the community more rapidly.

### 4. Does testing protect my family?

- a. Yes. Testing tells you who is currently infected with the virus. This is useful for your family because people who test positive should not be around older people or people with underlying health conditions. Also, some people who are infected only develop mild symptoms or no symptoms at all, so knowing that person is infected with the virus and may infect others will give you valuable information to prevent further spread.

### 5. What types of testing is being offered at the County and State testing sites?

- a. The County and State testing sites are only offering PCR (swab) testing. They are not offering antibody testing as a service to the general public at this time. If antibody testing becomes available, we will provide updated information.

### 6. What is the difference between PCR (swab) testing and antibody testing?

- a. In general, PCR (swab) testing tells us whether someone has an active coronavirus infection. This test is done by collecting a sample from the upper nasal passages or the back of the throat. Antibody testing tells us whether someone has had a past infection of COVID-19. An antibody test may not become positive until 10 days to 3 weeks after infection, and it is not clear whether the presence of antibodies



mean that a person is immune to the virus or for how long. Antibody testing is done by collecting a blood specimen, either through a blood draw or finger prick, depending on the technology. Antibody testing may provide useful information for knowing if you were infected before, but only nasal/throat swab PCR testing can be used to determine if someone can actually transmit COVID-19, and if you test positive on an antibody test you may need to do the PCR (swab) test as well. The County is currently offering the PCR (swab) test only.

**7. How reliable is the PCR (swab) test?**

- a. The PCR (swab) test is more likely to detect an infection earlier than the antibody test, but some PCR tests which use saliva and so-called “rapid PCR” tests may be less effective at doing so. The specific PCR (swab) test the County uses in most locations has a false negative rate between 0 and 9% depending on how the sample is acquired and how soon after your infection you were tested. However, PCR in general has a very low false positive rate, so if COVID-19 is detected, it is almost certainly accurate. Antibody tests may have a false negative rate up to around 30% for many of the same reasons, especially if they are done too early.

**8. I heard that there are sites that are operated by the County and sites that are operated by the State. Are there any differences in the tests that are performed?**

- a. No, the County of Riverside sites as well as the State of California testing sites all perform the same PCR (swab) testing.

**9. Do I need an appointment to get tested at a County site? At a State site? How do I make the appointment?**

- a. Yes, appointments are needed at all sites. Appointments can be made for any of the County of Riverside testing sites by calling (800) 945-6171. Appointments for the State of California testing sites can be made online at <https://lhi.care/covidtesting> or by calling (888) 634-1123.

**10. Can I get same day testing at County and/or State sites?**

- a. Yes, same day testing is available. However, all people wanting to be tested must have an appointment prior to arriving at a testing site.

**11. How long does it take to get my test results? Is it different if it is a County site or a State site?**

- a. Those tested at a County of Riverside testing site currently get their results back within 3 to 4 business days. Those tested at a State of California testing site also currently get their results back within 3 to 4 business days.

**12. Can I be tested more than once?**

- a. Yes. The PCR (swab) test is a point in time test. You can be tested more than once if you feel that you may have been exposed. Keep in mind that it may take several days after exposure to have a positive



result. If you are testing because you had a previous positive test result, you may wish to follow-up with the Department of Public Health (951-358-5107) to see if there is another way for you to be cleared.

**13. Is testing free at County or State sites?**

- a. There are no out-of-pocket costs for you to get tested at either County or State sites. However, we are asking for insurance information so that we can bill them directly. You will not be charged a co-pay or share of cost for the test. *If you do not have insurance or do not want to provide it, you will still get tested.*

**14. Can I get tested by my primary care provider or another provider in the community? And would those tests count in Riverside County's numbers?**

- a. Yes, testing may be available through providers in the community. Contact your provider to determine if they are available. Regardless of where you get tested, laboratories and medical providers are required to report test results to the Riverside County Department of Public Health.

**15. If I test positive, where does that information go? And what is contact tracing?**

- a. Test results are reported to the Riverside County Department of Public Health. This is required under the California Health and Safety Code and allows Public Health to promptly investigate cases and disrupt the spread of disease. During the investigation, the person with the positive test result will be asked about any other people that they may have been in close proximity to when they were contagious – these are called contacts. These contacts are called to determine if they sick or not and to determine the need for testing and/or quarantine. All information is confidential and Public Health does not identify the name of the person with positive results as part of the contact tracing activities. We do not disclose what we have learned to your family, friends, employer or law enforcement, and we do not tell individuals who are contacted whom they may have been exposed to.

**16. If I am a healthcare worker or first responder that has been exposed to someone with COVID-19 as part of my job, should I be tested?**

- a. Healthcare workers and first responders who have been exposed or are symptomatic should contact their workplace infection control contact, who will reach out to a dedicated support line within Public Health (the Special Investigations Unit). Appointments will be expedited for these classifications of workers to minimize the chance of transmission to vulnerable populations.

**17. What is known about antibody testing and should I have it done?**

- a. You or your healthcare provider may be interested in checking whether your body has made specific antibodies against the virus that causes COVID-19. It is important to note that antibody tests do not detect the virus itself, and thus are not meant to diagnose active infection. Antibody testing may help determine if a person has been exposed to COVID-19, the frequency of infection in persons without symptoms and how widespread the disease is within communities.



**18. Are there FDA-approved antibody tests?**

- a. Yes, there are at least twelve tests that have received Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) by the FDA, meaning the tests have met specific criteria to justify their use in a public health emergency. The EUA can be terminated or revoked by the FDA, after which the test may no longer be used. A list of current EUA test kits can be found at: <https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/emergency-situations-medical-devices/emergency-use-authorizations#coronavirus2019>