



Nashoba Associated Boards of Health

Using A COVID-19 Home Test: Best Practices for the General Public*

Testing is one of the important public health tools in our toolbox to reduce the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19. COVID-19 home tests (also sometimes called at-home tests, rapid antigen tests, self-tests, or over-the-counter tests) are becoming more widely available to the general public, though with high demand they can at times be difficult to locate. We at Nashoba understand that accessing testing can be challenging. We want to make sure our communities are getting the most out of their home tests, so we have put together this helpful guide.

**Please note that home tests are not accepted in all situations; see footnote at end of this document.*

Why would I consider using a home test?

COVID-19 home tests are easy to use, convenient, and provide quick results. Some home tests are available to purchase at a retail store or pharmacy without a prescription. Beginning 1/15/22, private and group insurance companies [will be required to cover the cost of FDA approved at-home tests](#) (8 free OTC home kits per covered individual per month.) Kits currently on the market are for use on **individuals ages two and up**. As of 1/19/22, under a special Federal program, each household is entitled to 4 free home test kits. For more information, visit: <https://www.covidtests.gov/>. Tests can be ordered from the U.S. Post Office at <https://special.usps.com/testkits>.

Testing at home can help you limit your exposure to other people. The point of a home test is to inform your decision-making regarding exposure, and return to activity, and help you know what to do next. Per Massachusetts DPH and pursuant to the new isolation and quarantine guidelines released 12/29/21, a negative test result is not required to exit isolation after having COVID-19. A test is recommended but not required to return to activity following quarantine, five days after exposure*.

When should I home test for COVID-19?

You should get tested for COVID-19 regardless of vaccination status, whether by rapid test at home or by PCR at a healthcare provider:

- if you develop ANY symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, chills, or shaking, cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, sore throat, muscle aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, nausea, vomiting or diarrhea) even if they are mild, OR
- if you are identified as a close contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19. In this case, you would ideally test on day 5 after your last exposure if no symptoms; otherwise, isolate and test **immediately** if any symptoms develop.

How do I use a COVID-19 home test?

There are multiple different types of tests available for at-home use, and the instructions and materials vary by test kit. Most are nasal swab kits, but some collect a saliva specimen. **BE SURE TO FOLLOW THE**

DIRECTIONS THAT COME WITH YOUR TEST CAREFULLY AND COMPLETELY. We recommend reading the instructions all the way through at least once prior to opening any of the components of your test kit. Do not use an expired or damaged home test. Wash and dry your hands thoroughly before and after testing, and always set your testing materials on a clean flat surface. Follow the test kit instructions for disposal of your materials after use.

How do I interpret my home test results?

Again, be sure to read over the directions that come with your test carefully. These directions should contain written and visual instructions for interpreting your test result. DPH recommends individuals that have COVID symptoms and test negative with a rapid antigen test should isolate and either repeat an antigen test or get a PCR test in 24-48 hours if they continue to exhibit symptoms.

A PCR test is not required to confirm a positive result on a home test.

What should I do if my home test is positive?

A positive home test result is the responsibility of the test-taker. We all need to do our part to slow the spread of COVID-19 in Massachusetts. This aligns with the latest guidance from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health.

If your COVID-19 home test is positive, ***isolate yourself immediately*** and inform your healthcare provider. You should also inform all of your *close contacts* (anyone you were within 6 feet of for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period, in the two days prior to development of symptoms, or within the two days prior to testing if you have no symptoms). This applies regardless of vaccination status or masking by you or your contacts. ***You do NOT need to inform your local board of health or health agent of your positive home test result.***

Where can I find more information on COVID-19 home testing?

Please visit the links below for additional information.

Massachusetts DPH- Public Health Advisory Regarding COVID-19 Testing

<https://www.mass.gov/advisory/public-health-advisory-regarding-covid-19-testing>

CDC- Overview of Self-Testing (available in multiple languages)

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/testing/self-testing.html>

CDC- How to Use a Self-Test YouTube Video

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Pxxk6ZcCfz8&ab_channel=CentersforDiseaseControlandPrevention%28CDC%29

CDC- How to Interpret Self-Test Results YouTube Video

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xli2t4skfx0&ab_channel=CentersforDiseaseControlandPrevention%28CDC%29

**Please note that schools, employers or providers may have different or more strict requirements. It is recommended that you check with your employer, school or provider. You can also check guidance for schools: [K-12](#) and early education and childcare: [EEC](#). Travelers should check requirements prior to travelling as some modes of transportation and destinations may have different requirements.*

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