

Point-of-Care (POC) Tests

A POC test can rapidly screen people for COVID-19, with results usually ready in 20 minutes or less. In certain settings, this can help to reduce the chances of outbreaks and control the spread of COVID-19.

POC tests can be less accurate than the standard COVID-19 test, which is called a PCR (polymerase chain reaction) test (see *PCR Tests* below for more information). This means that POC tests have a higher chance of false results than PCR tests.

Because POC tests are less accurate than the standard COVID-19 test, POC test results are considered “presumptive.” This means that the results have not been proven by a laboratory test.

If your POC test result is positive, you will need to go for a standard COVID-19 PCR test for confirmation.

Use of POC Tests

In most cases, POC tests are only recommended for screening people with no [symptoms](#) and who are not [self-isolating](#). If you have [symptoms](#), please use the [self-assessment tool](#) to determine if you need a [PCR test](#) (see below).

Health authorities can use POC tests for outbreak management in high-risk settings (like work camps or long-term care facilities) or in areas with limited testing. These POC tests are publicly funded and part of [BC's Rapid Point of Care Testing Strategy](#).

POC Test Sample Collection

Most kits use nasal swabs to take a sample from each nostril. The swab will only go a few centimetres inside your nose and should not hurt.

At this time, nasal swab collection can be done by a health care professional or a trained individual. Self-collected nasal swabs are permitted when observed by a health care professional or a trained individual. Training is required for anyone collecting or observing self-collected nasal swabs and for all individuals performing these tests, to ensure that important quality and reporting standards are met.

POC Test Results

Your test results and other personal health information are confidential. Only you and the POC screening program will have access to your information and results.

Positive Result

You will be asked to go home and [self-isolate](#) immediately. Close household contacts may need to also self-isolate based on guidance from public health.

You will also be asked to [get a PCR test](#) to confirm the result. You will get further instructions with your PCR test results.

Negative Result

A POC test only provides a result at the specific time that you take the test. A negative POC result does not guarantee that you are not infected (because it can be a false-negative), nor does it predict if you will become infected in the future.

Even if your POC result is negative, you still need to continue following public health guidelines and following your workplace safety plans and all other public health directives.

If you are [self-isolating](#), you should continue until the end date provided by public health.

Invalid Result

This means that the test was not performed correctly or the test kit was defective. You may be asked, or want, to take another POC test.

PCR Tests

PCR tests are done at COVID-19 test collection centres and in hospitals. They are usually done if someone is showing signs or symptoms of COVID-19, or if their POC test suggests they are presumed to have COVID-19. PCR tests are considered the gold standard for confirmation of a COVID-19 diagnosis.

PCR test results take longer than POC tests because they have to be shipped to a laboratory.

If you receive a positive PCR test result, you will receive instructions from public health and can also visit BCCDC's website to learn more about what your [positive PCR test result means and what to do next](#) (bccdc.ca/results).

If you test positive, whether or not you have [symptoms of COVID-19](#), it is important to monitor how you feel. If you find it hard to breathe, experience any chest pain, can't drink anything, feel very sick or confused, or develop any other symptoms that concern you, seek urgent medical care. You should continue to seek care for other medical conditions as needed, even if it's not related to COVID-19.