Point-of-care (POC) tests can be used to rapidly screen people for COVID-19 in settings where there may be a higher risk of COVID-19 infection (like work camps or long-term care facilities), to reduce the chances of outbreaks and control the spread of COVID-19.

If someone is coming to your workplace or community settings to do COVID-19 POC testing, this document has information that will let you know what to expect and what you need to do.

**Point-of-care tests**

POC test results are usually ready in less than 20 minutes. They are less accurate than the standard COVID-19 test (which is called a PCR test; see *PCR tests* below for more information on this type of test).

This means that POC tests can produce false-positive or false-negative results. There are many reasons why a test result might be a false positive or a false negative, such as how common COVID-19 is in the community, or whether the person being tested is showing signs of COVID-19 or not.

Because POC tests are less accurate than the standard COVID-19 test, POC test results are considered “presumptive”. If your POC test result is positive, you might be asked to go for a standard COVID-19 (PCR) test for confirmation of COVID-19. If your POC test results are negative, you are still expected to follow the standard public health recommendations (e.g. mask wearing, physical distancing).

**PCR tests**

PCR (*polymerase chain reaction*) 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 COVID-19 diagnosis.

PCR test results take longer to get than POC tests, because they have to be shipped to a laboratory where they are done.
How to prepare for a POC test

Participation in rapid POC testing is voluntary.

You may not be eligible for POC testing if you:

- have any symptoms of COVID-19 ([bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/about-covid-19/symptoms](bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/about-covid-19/symptoms))
- are self-isolating for any reason.

If you are not eligible for POC test screening, or if PCR testing is available in your area, you may be asked to go to your nearest [COVID-19 collection centre](bccdc.ca/covid19testing) for a PCR test. If PCR testing is limited in your area, POC testing may be used instead.

How POC test sample collection is done

A sample will be taken from each nostril, using a swab. The swab will only go a few centimeters inside your nose; it should not hurt.

You might be asked to wait until your results are ready. The place where you had your POC test is responsible for telling you your results.

- If your POC test result is positive, someone will alert you.
- If your POC test result is negative, you might not be contacted.

Test results

Your test results and other personal health information are confidential. Only you and the individuals required to be informed as part of the POC screening program will have access to your information and your results.

Presumptive 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 a negative result can be a false negative), nor does it predict whether you will or will not become infected in the future.

Even if your POC result is negative, you still need to continue physical distancing, wear a mask, practice hand hygiene, and follow your workplace safety plans and all other public health directives.
Invalid result
This means that the test was not performed correctly or the test kit was defective. You may be asked to take another POC test.

Presumptive positive result
A positive POC test means that you are presumed to be infected with COVID-19. You will be asked to go home and self-isolate (bccdc.ca/covid19self-isolation) immediately. Close household contacts must also self-isolate.

Usually, a positive POC result cannot be used to diagnose you with COVID-19. Where available, you will be asked to get a PCR test to confirm the result. Public health will be notified of the positive POC result; it is the responsibility of the employer/workplace to do this. You will get further instructions after the PCR test results are ready.

After your POC test
Following your positive POC test, you will typically have a PCR test to confirm this result. After your PCR test, 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 it becomes hard to breathe, you can’t drink anything, you feel very sick or if you 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.