

Frequently Asked Question for Consumers Related to the COVID Antibody Testing

Overview of COVID-19 & Antibody Testing

What is the COVID-19 Antibody test?

The test is designed to detect antibodies (also known as immunoglobulins) against the virus that causes COVID-19. This is not the same as the COVID-19 diagnostic test. Antibodies are proteins produced by the immune system in response to an infection and are specific to that particular infection. This test detects IgG antibodies that start to develop in most patients within seven to 10 days after symptoms of COVID-19 begin. IgG antibodies remain in the blood after an infection has passed. These antibodies indicate that you may have had COVID-19 in the recent past. It is unknown at this point how much protection antibodies might provide against another infection of COVID-19.

What does a COVID-19 antibody test entail?

The COVID-19 antibody test is a venous blood draw of one tube of blood, similar to a blood draw done for other common tests like cholesterol screening.

How will tests be processed?

Local lab partners will process the tube of blood drawn.

Is Piedmont using the same COVID-19 antibody tests that other healthcare systems are using?

Not necessarily. Piedmont has researched all of the available antibody testing. Piedmont uses only FDA/EUA approved testing options which are serology (human serum) tests offered by Quest and LabCorp. Piedmont has partnered for many years with these well-known and reputable laboratory testing corporations. While the testing for the COVID-19 antibody is still very new, Piedmont believes that these tests are superior to other, non-FDA, approved options. More importantly, we would like to help educate our patients on these tests and the results so they are properly informed prior to receiving results; therefore, we require a consult/office visit with one of our providers prior to testing.

Scheduling

When will I be able to schedule an appointment for COVID-19 antibody testing?

Piedmont primary care, urgent care and QuickCare clinics will offer COVID-19 antibody testing beginning April 30, 2020.

How do I schedule an appointment for COVID-19 antibody testing?

Schedule an office visit via MyChart, at piedmont.org, or by calling your provider's office directly. You can see your provider in-person or use our telehealth services.

Do I have to have an established relationship with a Piedmont physician in order to have testing done at their office?

Piedmont is accepting new patient appointments for COVID-19 antibody testing. We can see new patients through a virtual or in-person visit.

Can testing be completed as part of a previously scheduled appointment or do I need to schedule a separate appointment?

COVID-19 antibody testing can be performed as its own office visit or as part of another appointment.

If I am sick, am I eligible to be tested?

If you have respiratory symptoms or fever, we advise that you wait for symptoms to clear prior to testing. If you are concerned about your current symptoms, please schedule a visit with a provider to receive more instructions.

If I already had the COVID-19 test, do I need the antibody test?

If you tested positive for the COVID-19 nasal swab, it is not necessary to have COVID-19 antibody testing; however, it may give you some information about how your body has responded.

Where do I go for the antibody test?

For COVID-19 antibody testing, please schedule at one of the following locations:

- Piedmont Physicians primary care practices
- Piedmont Urgent Care locations in Athens & Columbus
- Piedmont Urgent Care by WellStreet
- Piedmont QuickCare at Walgreens locations
- All Piedmont physician practices

Note: Due to the pandemic, some clinics may be closed temporarily. Visit piedmont.org for updates on temporary closures which may impact your choice of location for antibody testing.

What does Piedmont do to keep me safe during my appointment for COVID-19 antibody testing?

For in-person visits, we are following updated and strict safety protocols including:

- All patients will be screened for fever and respiratory symptoms prior to entrance. If patients arrive for their appointment with problematic symptoms, we will treat them in their cars so that we can provide care but not increase exposure.
- Interaction with people inside the office will be limited, and we request that patients, providers and staff maintain a social distance of 6 feet except during testing.
- Piedmont will continue our already strict decontamination processes, including the use of EPA-approved virus-killing products to clean and disinfect exam rooms and high-touch areas.
- You need to wear your own mask; staff will wear personal protective equipment (PPE) to limit exposure.

Where will COVID-19 antibody testing occur?

Once the test is ordered, you will need to provide a blood sample. If practices have in-house lab services, the test can be done on site. Otherwise, patients will receive a referral for the test to be performed at a nearby lab partner.

Is drive-thru COVID-19 antibody testing available?

Drive-thru antibody testing is not available at this time.

Is there an age limit to who can be tested?

COVID-19 antibody testing can be conducted on individuals of all ages. However, if you are under 18 years of age, please consult your child's physician.

Does individual testing need to occur for every member of my household?

Every family member could be tested as exposure could vary. Individuals will require a separate office visit to receive appropriate counseling individualized for them.

Between when I have my COVID-19 antibody testing and when I receive my results, what should I do to stay safe?

Please continue to follow COVID-19 safety guidelines; wash your hands often, shelter in place as much as possible, use a mask in public, and practice safe social distancing protocols by staying 6 feet from others.

Cost

How much does it cost to have COVID-19 antibody testing?

You will be charged your co-pay for a primary care, urgent care or QuickCare visit. The laboratory (Quest or LabCorp) will bill your insurance for payment for the test. If you do not have insurance, the fee will be \$55-\$65 billed by Quest. Self-pay pricing for LabCorp is not available at this time.

Will insurance cover my testing?

Most insurance carriers will cover COVID-19 antibody testing.

Understanding your test results

When will I receive my COVID-19 antibody test results?

Test results should be available within 2-3 business days.

How will I receive my COVID-19 antibody test results?

Test results may be accessed within your personal medical record accessed via MyChart. If you do not have a MyChart account, your provider's office will call you with your results within 2-3 business days. Please do not call your provider's office inquiring about test results.

What do my COVID-19 antibody testing results mean?

The COVID-19 antibody test will tell us if you have an antibody to COVID-19 or you do not have the antibody. It is thought to take about 6 weeks for your body to learn how to make this new antibody. Any test that we do has some error and Piedmont is committed to having the most accurate test possible. This test does **NOT** indicate you are immune to COVID-19.

- If the test comes back positive, it means you may have been exposed to COVID-19 and your body is responding in the appropriate manner by forming antibodies to help combat the coronavirus. At this time, science does not have the ability to say for certain that people with this antibody are now immune to COVID-19. We can only say that you may have been exposed. It also does not tell us if you have the infection currently or if you are still infectious.

- If the test comes back negative, it means that you have a lower likelihood that you have been exposed to COVID-19 or that it is too early to detect the body's immune reaction (less than 6 weeks). A negative result does **NOT indicate that you are immune** to COVID-19.
- There is also a chance that a positive result is incorrect (false positive). Piedmont is committed to having the most accurate test possible.

Will my results tell me if I am immune to COVID-19?

No, this antibody test **does not indicate immunity**. At this time, science does not have the ability to say for certain that people with this antibody are now immune to COVID-19.

Are follow up doctor appointments needed based on my results?

No, you will not require follow-up visits based on the results of the testing. However, if you have any questions or experiencing any non-emergent health concerns, please schedule time with your primary care provider.

Can my results change over time?

Yes. If you tested your blood early in the process of your body learning how to make this antibody, you could test negative. It takes up to 6 weeks for our bodies to learn how to make this antibody. We do not know how long the positive antibodies will stay but similar antibodies typically remain in the body for years.

Depending on my results, should I change safety precautions I have been following (wearing masks in public, social distancing, etc.)?

No, we recommend you continue to follow COVID-19 safety guidelines.

Public Interest

Am I required to have COVID-19 antibody testing to go out in public or to go to work?

You are not required to get a test in order to go out in public. Some workplaces are asking people to be tested in order to go back to work; however, having the test does not indicate immunity.

Why is the media and the government talking about testing so much?

Having this data from the general population will allow us to know how many people have likely been exposed to the virus and perhaps did not have any symptoms or mild symptoms. It will also give us information about if these antibodies actually do protect us from getting the virus again.