What to Know about Testing for COVID-19

COVID-19 tests are important tools for diagnosing COVID-19 infection. There are limitations to any test and these tests work best in diagnosing people who have symptoms of COVID-19 infection.

Who should get tested?
Anyone who develops new symptoms after an exposure to someone with COVID-19 should get tested. People who have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 but don't have symptoms can consider testing but should wait until the right time to prevent inaccurate results.

When should I get tested?
If you have symptoms concerning for COVID-19, you should get tested. After exposure to someone with COVID-19, you are at potential risk for developing infection for 14 days after the exposure. If you have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 but don't have new symptoms, it is important to wait for 8 days after the exposure to reduce the chances of an inaccurate test.

Why should I wait to get tested?
It takes time for the SARS CoV-2 virus that causes COVID-19 to become detectable, even with the sensitive tests being used. For example, getting a test the day after an exposure gives you a 100% chance of a negative test even if you later develop infection.

Where should I get tested?
Several testing sites are available throughout the San Antonio area and are listed on the San Antonio Metro Health web site.
https://covid19.sanantonio.gov/What-YOU-Can-Do/Testing/List-of-Testing-Locations-in-Bexar-County

It is not advised to go the Emergency Center at a hospital just for testing. Emergency Centers at hospitals throughout the city are very busy taking care of symptomatic patients with COVID-19. If you go to one of these centers for testing, you might potentially become exposed to someone with symptomatic COVID-19 disease waiting to receive medical care.

What does a negative test result mean?
If you are asymptomatic but have been exposed to someone with COVID-19, it means that you don't have detectable COVID-19 at the time of the test but it doesn't change the 14-day window of infection risk you have from exposure. You should continue to monitor twice daily for fever and symptoms for the full 14 days.

What does a positive test result mean?
You have detectable COVID-19 and can potentially transmit infection to others. You should self-isolate and follow the instructions provided by the testing site that has provided your results. Additional information on what to do can be found on the CDC web site.
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/index.html

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