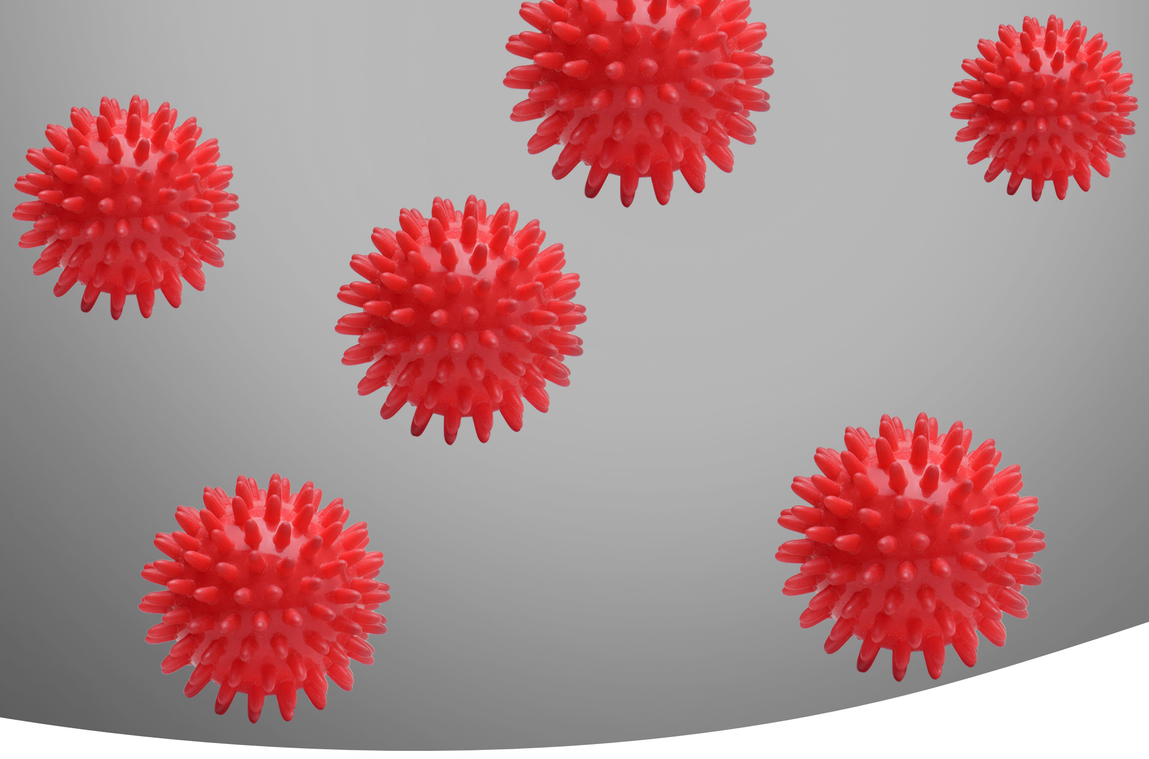

COVID-19 ANTIBODY TESTING

WHAT IS ANTIBODY TESTING?

The COVID-19 antibody test (also called serology test) looks for antibodies in your blood. Blood will be taken and tested for one, or both, of two antibodies to the virus that causes COVID-19.

- **IgM antibodies** - these are antibodies that develop early in an infection
- **IgG antibodies** - these are antibodies that are more likely to show up after you have recovered

WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO KNOW

Tests for antibodies have been developed, but data is lacking on what exactly these tests mean. There is still much that is unknown about COVID-19 infection and antibody testing, but keep reading to see what is currently known...

WHAT ANTIBODY TESTS CANNOT DO

Antibody testing cannot tell you if you are immune to COVID-19.

One major issue with antibody testing is that since this is a new virus, it is unknown to what extent a person who is exposed to, or has been ill with COVID-19, may be immune to future exposures of the virus that causes COVID-19.

Antibody testing should not be used by employers as a condition for employees to return to work.

Antibody testing is not being recommended to determine if an employee may go back to work. Having antibodies cannot tell to what extent a person may be immune to COVID-19.

Antibody testing cannot diagnose you with COVID-19.

A diagnosis of COVID-19 requires testing to be done on a sample taken from the respiratory tract. The antibody test cannot tell someone if they are actively infected with the virus that causes COVID-19. It may take several weeks after exposure before a person develops antibodies.

WHAT ANTIBODY TESTS CAN DO

Antibody testing may tell if you were exposed to the virus that causes COVID-19.

If a person is found to have antibodies to a particular virus, then it is likely they have been exposed in the past and possible that they may have some amount of immunity. The virus that causes COVID-19 is similar to other respiratory viruses and it is possible that antibodies found by these tests could be related to these other viruses. For COVID-19, it is not yet known whether antibodies equal immunity.

Antibody testing can help scientists and researchers to better understand how common COVID-19 infection is in the community.

Researchers are always interested in learning more about new viruses such as the one that causes COVID-19. Antibody testing can be used to help find out how widespread exposures are, how it spreads in a population, and when paired with other scientific information can help researchers to understand who might be immune to the disease.

Antibody testing may be used to help identify potential blood donors for an experimental treatment.

An experimental treatment for COVID-19 uses plasma (the liquid portion of blood) donated from people who have recovered from COVID-19 and is thought to help people get better faster. Antibody testing can help to identify potential plasma donors to be used in this treatment. The treatment is known as convalescent plasma.

LIMITATIONS

There are limitations to having the antibody test and this test might not be right for everyone. Once again, having COVID-19 antibodies does not necessarily mean that a person is immune. False positives and false negatives may also occur with this test. For example, a person may have been exposed to seasonal varieties of coronavirus (which circulate yearly in the United States and cause mild cold symptoms) which could possibly cause a positive COVID-19 antibody test. Be sure to ask your healthcare provider about the status of the test you are receiving. Not all tests have been granted Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) by the FDA. For additional information, please see https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/emergency-use-authorizations-medical-devices/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19-emergency-use-authorizations-medical-devices.

***For more information**, visit the New Jersey Department of Health at www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/ncov.shtml and covid19.nj.gov.*
***Have questions?** Call the COVID-19 hotline at 1-800-962-1253 or 2-1-1*

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