

Screening Test/Test to Stay FAQ

What is the purpose of screening testing?

Screening testing is used to identify individuals infected with COVID-19. Identifying individuals with COVID-19 early in their infectious period allows them to be quickly isolated and prevents further spread of COVID-19 in the school setting.

How is screening testing different from Test to Stay?

Test to Stay is a type of screening testing specifically for individuals who have a known contact with a COVID-19 case. Typically, close contacts who do not meet any quarantine exclusion criteria, would need to quarantine at home for a specific number of days. Test to Stay screening testing allows those individuals to stay in school as long as they test negative for COVID-19 during those days they would otherwise be quarantining at home.

What type of tests should be used for screening testing/Test to Stay?

Rapid antigen is the preferred test for Test to Stay because you can get test results quickly, typically within 15 minutes. PCR tests can be used, but should have a short turn-around time. Turn around time is the time between when a specimen is collected and when results of that test are available. For screening testing purposes, the turn around time for PCR should be no longer than 48 hours.

Can at-home tests be used for screening testing/Test to Stay?

The decision of whether or not at-home testing will be allowed for screening testing is up to the individual school/district.

If I tested negative on Day 5, why do I have to keep wearing a mask?

The incubation period of COVID-19 is 14 days. That means that it can take an individual who was exposed to COVID-19 14 days to become sick from the time they were initially exposed. We know that the chance of being infected with COVID-19 decreases the closer you get to 14 days, with minimal risk after 10 days. That is why wearing a mask through Day 10 is required.

I don't have symptoms, but my antigen test is positive. Do I have COVID-19?

While false positives can occur, asymptomatic infection is common with COVID-19. If community transmission is high or if you've have contact with a COVID-19 case, a positive test result is likely a true positive.

I don't have symptoms and I tested positive with an antigen test. I took additional antigen tests and they are negative. Do I have COVID-19?

Once you've tested positive for COVID-19 on an antigen test, additional antigen tests cannot be used to rule-out COVID-19 infection. The only way to rule-out COVID-19 for an asymptomatic individual with a positive antigen test is with a negative PCR test collected no later than 48 hours after the initial antigen test was collected. If a PCR test is not collected within 48 hours of the initial antigen test, you should complete COVID-19 isolation guidance.

I have COVID-19 symptoms and tested negative with an antigen test. Can I return to work/school?

No. The only way to rule-out COVID-19 infection for a symptomatic individual is with a PCR test.