

FAQs on COVID-19 Testing for County Essential Workers

1. Am I an Essential Worker?

You are considered an Essential Worker if your job has frequent interactions with the public or with people who have COVID-19, or your job meets the criteria defined by the [California Department of Managed Health Care Emergency Regulation](#). For the County, Essential Workers can include the following groups of County employees:

- Direct care providers that have **frequent interactions with the public or with people who have COVID-19**, including:
 - Front-line Health Care staff – Physicians, Dentists, mid-level Practitioners, Registered Nurses, Licensed Vocational Nurses, Nursing Assistants/Aides, Certified Medical Assistants, Pharmacists, Nutritionists, Psychologists/Mental Health Counselors/Marriage and Family Therapists, Substance Use Disorder Counselors, Front Desk/Registration staff;
 - Emergency Service Workers – Fire/Paramedics/Emergency Medical Technicians, Police Officers, Child and Adult Protective Services Workers, etc;
 - Various Diagnostic Technicians – Radiology, Phlebotomy, etc;
 - Physical, respiratory, speech and occupational therapists;
 - Social Service Workers - Social Workers, Marriage and Family Therapists, Medical Case Workers, Community Health Workers, other fields/Outreach Workers, Eligibility Workers;
- Individuals working in Ambulatory Care, Hospital Care, Emergency Medical Services, Public Health, Behavioral Health, Community Health, Home Health Care, Correctional Facility Workers, Outreach workers that have **frequent interactions with the public or with people who have COVID-19**;
- Other critical support service workers that have **frequent interactions with the public or with people who have COVID-19**, including those that work in the following sectors:
 - Food service
 - Public works and maintenance
 - Environmental service – laundry, waste management, custodial
 - Medical records
 - Information technology
 - Supply Chain/Transportation/Logistics

2. How do I know when I need a test?

The DMHC Regulation that allows for this testing does not require you to have symptoms or have a known exposure to be tested. That said, if you have symptoms or are worried that you were recently exposed to someone who has COVID-19 testing should be a higher priority. You can check your symptoms using the [CDC Symptoms Self-Checker](#). If you have symptoms, stay home, avoid contact with others and seek testing right away.

If you don't have symptoms, but think you were exposed, stay home, avoid contact with others, and get tested about 3-5 days after the day you were exposed. The test will tell us if you might spread the virus to others. If you test too early after exposure, the amount of virus in your body may be low, and the test can miss the infection. You could develop symptoms and become infectious for up to 14 days after you were exposed. This is why it is important to avoid contact with others for 14 days, even if you test negative.

Frequent or regular testing is usually not necessary. If you have questions about whether or not to get a test, talk to your primary care physician.

3. How do I know I've been exposed?

If you know you were in close contact with someone with COVID-19, then you were likely exposed. Being in close contact means being within six feet of an infected person for more than 15 minutes. If you were wearing personal protective equipment at the time, it's unlikely you were exposed. If you are concerned about a recent exposure, you should be tested within 3-5 days of your exposure.

4. When am I most likely to infect other people with the virus?

If you have COVID-19, you are most likely to infect people during the two days BEFORE you start having symptoms. Most of the infections occur in the two days prior to your symptoms. If you develop symptoms, you may continue to transmit the infection for 10 days after symptoms start. Some people who are severely ill or have immune system problems can spread the infection for 20 days or longer. You should talk with your doctor about how long you may be infectious.

5. How do I get a COVID-19 test?

Contact your health plan that help you decide whether you need a test and help you get a test.

If your provider is not able to provide you a test quickly, you can get one through the County. The County partnered with your Health Plan to offer County Essential Workers access to tests at seven pick-up/drop-off locations: La Puente Library, East Los Angeles Library, Dr. Martin Luther King Library (Carson), San Fernando Library, Alondra Library (Norwalk), Lancaster Library, and at the DPSS facility in Glendale. [Click here to register for a test](#) (use Chrome or Microsoft Edge), if your health plan is not able to schedule you within 48 hours. After you register, go to the County pick-up/drop-off location you selected to pick up the test kit. Once you have the test kit, you can collect your own sample and then drop it off at the same location the same day.

6. How will I collect my own sample?

The County uses a kit that allows you to collect the sample yourself. You will take the sample from the front of your nose – 1 cm (less than an inch) into each nostril. Taking a sample from your nose is the best way to test whether you have a COVID-19 infection. This is not the deep nose swab that many find very uncomfortable.

7. What tests are available for COVID-19 screening in Essential Workers?

There are 2 types of tests for SARS-CoV-2 currently:

- a) Molecular tests (PCR) look for COVID-19 genes. This type of test is very sensitive and can detect disease early. It can also detect the virus even after you have recovered – up to 12 weeks or longer! This is the test currently being offered at County Testing Centers.
- b) Antigen tests look for proteins from the virus. This test can be useful when you have symptoms. It is faster and less expensive than a molecular test. But the test can miss infection. If your antigen test is negative (e.g. it does not show infection), you may still be infected. If your test is negative, you should get a PCR test.

8. What should I do if I have a positive test?

Stay home and away from others. If you have been at work, contact your Departmental Human Resources team. Persons who have a positive test (especially those who are older than 60 years old or have a chronic medical condition) should contact their provider for advice. If you develop any symptoms such as high fever, difficulty breathing, or severe coughing, you should seek care. Persons with no symptoms or just mild

symptoms can often manage their own care at home. All persons with a positive test need to stay home and avoid contact with others for 10 days following their first symptom or the date of the positive test.

9. After a positive test (meaning the test shows you have COVID-19), when should I get retested?

Retesting is not needed. After you complete isolation for 10 days, you can return to work and resume usual activities. You do not need Public Health clearance or a negative COVID-19 test to return to work. However, you should continue to wear a mask and physically distance yourself from others.

10. After a negative test (meaning the test shows you don't have COVID-19), when should I be retested?

If you have symptoms and your molecular (PCR) test is negative, you probably don't have COVID-19. You probably have another virus. You should discuss this with your doctor.

If you have symptoms and your antigen test (instead of a molecular test (PCR) is negative, you should get a molecular (PCR) test.

If you have a negative test and then develop symptoms later, your virus levels may have been too low to show up on the test. You should get tested again and stay away from others for 10 days after symptoms.

11. May I be tested on County time?

Yes. With Supervisor approval you may take time off work to get a COVID-19 test. Your self collection should take less than 15 minutes. Test locations are across the County and located to be no more than a short drive away. The whole process should be able to be handled in about two hours. Mileage is not paid.