

What type of coronavirus test should my child get?

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Editor's note: For the latest news about the COVID-19 pandemic, visit

<https://www.aapublications.org/news/2020/01/28/coronavirus>.

Families across the U.S. are talking about whether their children should be tested for COVID-19.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) encourages parents to talk to their child's pediatrician about testing.

There are two types of COVID-19 tests: diagnostic tests and antibody tests. It is important to know what each test can and cannot do.

A **diagnostic test** can show if your child has COVID-19 infection now.

One kind of diagnostic test is a molecular test. It uses a nasal or throat swab or sometimes saliva. You might get results the same day or up to a week later. The molecular test is very accurate and tells you if your child has SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. It will not tell if your child had COVID-19 in the past. It also will not tell you that your child will not become infected in the future.

Another kind of diagnostic test is an antigen test. It uses a nasal or throat swab. Results take an hour or less. Positive test results are very accurate. But if the test result is negative, a molecular test might be needed so you know for sure that your child does not have the virus that causes COVID-19.

An **antibody test** looks for antibodies in your child's blood. The body makes antibodies to fight off viruses like SARS-CoV-2. An antibody test uses a sample of blood. It shows if your child was infected by coronavirus in the past. It cannot detect current COVID-19 infection. This is because it can take up to three weeks after your child first shows symptoms of being sick before the test can find antibodies in the blood sample. Many test locations can give you results the same day or within one to three days. Sometimes, a second antibody test is needed.

The AAP does not recommend testing every child. It is important to talk with your pediatrician about whether testing is necessary and if so, what option is best. Testing might be recommended for a child who currently has symptoms of COVID-19 or who was in close contact with someone with COVID-19. After testing, it is important to follow up with your pediatrician. She or he can explain positive or negative test results and answer questions. It is not known if people who had COVID-19 can catch it again.

If you have any concerns about your child's health, call your pediatrician. Pediatricians are open for business and ready to care for your children.

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