# HRInsights

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## Using Antibody Tests for COVID-19

The virus that causes COVID-19 is new, and what we know about it changes rapidly. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has developed interim guidance for how health care providers, laboratories and public health staff should use antibody tests. These tests look for the presence of antibodies, which are proteins made in response to infections.

This article will provide an overview of using antibody tests for preventing the spread of COVID-19.

### What are antibodies?

Antibodies are detected in the blood of people who are tested after infection; they show the body's efforts to fight off a specific infection.

Antibodies start developing within one to three weeks after infection. The CDC doesn't currently have enough information yet to say whether someone will definitely be immune and protected from reinfection if they have antibodies to the virus that causes COVID-19.

### COVID-19 Antibody Test

In general, a positive antibody test is presumed to mean a person has been infected with SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, at some point in the past. It does not mean they are currently infected.

Health care providers who use antibody tests must know how the different tests work and use caution when interpreting test results:

- If someone tests positive for COVID-19 antibodies but does not really have those specific antibodies, the result is a false positive. Similarly, if someone tests negative for COVID-19 antibodies but does really have those specific antibodies, the result is a false negative.
- The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has authorized antibody tests for this virus that have been submitted for their review. But these tests are not 100% accurate, and some false positive results or false negative results may occur.
- A higher percentage of positive results may be false positives when these tests are used in people who live or work in an area where very few people have had COVID-19.

### Antibody Test Results

People who receive positive results on an antibody test but don't have symptoms of COVID-19 or have not been around someone who may have COVID-19 are not likely to have a current infection. They can continue with normal activities, including work, but should still take steps to protect themselves and others.

People who receive positive results on an antibody test and who are currently or recently sick or have been around someone with COVID-19 should follow

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CDC recommendations on [caring for themselves and protecting others](#) and [when they can be around other people again](#).

### Do's and Don'ts of Antibody Testing

According to the CDC guidance, employers and employees should do the following:

- Until scientists get more data on whether antibodies protect against reinfection with this virus, everyone should continue to [take steps to protect themselves and others](#), including staying at least 6 feet away from other people outside of their home (social distancing), even if they have had a positive antibody test.
- People who wear personal protective equipment (PPE) at work should continue to wear PPE, even if they test positive for antibodies to the virus.

Employers and employees should adhere to the following rules in regard to antibody tests:

- Antibody test results should not be used to determine if someone can return to work.
- Antibody test results should not be used to group people together in settings such as schools, dormitories and correctional facilities.

Employers should reference federal, state and local guidance related to viral and antibody testing for COVID-19.

### More Information

For more information on the COVID-19 pandemic and keeping the workplace healthy, contact SCS Agency Inc today.

Source: CDC