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COVID-19 TESTING FAQ'S

UPDATED: OCTOBER 2020

WHAT IS COVID-19?

Coronavirus (COVID-19) is an infectious disease, caused by a newly identified strain of coronavirus.

Most people who are infected with the COVID-19 virus experience a mild to moderate respiratory illness, and normally recover at home without needing any special treatment. Some people are at higher risk of a more serious illness because of COVID-19, such as older people and those with underlying medical problems such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, and cancer.

The COVID-19 virus spreads through droplets expelled into the air when an infected person sneezes or cough. Therefore, it so important to be vigilant about respiratory etiquette- i.e. coughing into your elbow, or directly into a tissue that you immediately throw into the bin followed by washing your hands.

Currently, there is no specific treatment or vaccination available for COVID-19. There are, however, ongoing clinical trials looking into potential future treatments as well as an effective vaccine. The World Health Organisation continue to keep us up to date with any new treatment or vaccine information.

The most effective way to slow down the transmission of, and even prevent, COVID-19 is by being aware of how the disease spreads. It is very important that you protect yourself and others from becoming infected is by washing your hands frequently for 20 seconds under warm water with soap, or alcohol gel if hand washing is not possible, in combination with not touching your face.

WHAT TESTS ARE AVAILABLE?

1. PCR Swab test: this test involves a swab of the back of the mouth (tonsils and pharynx) and the nose. It can be performed at home by yourself, however care must be taken to follow the instructions given, to ensure your test results will be as accurate as possible. This test is most accurate when performed by a healthcare professional who is experienced in swab taking, leading to less false negative results. We can provide swabbing at our practice- simply call us to find out more about this service.

   Your swab will then be analysed by our accredited Laboratory using the most up to date PCR technology. The laboratory will be trying to detect the viral nucleic material (RNA) within the COVID-19 Coronavirus, to see if you currently have an infection.

   2) IgG Antibody Test: This is a blood test, taken from your vein, that looks for the presence of COVID-19 antibodies, which are produced by your body because of exposure to the virus. The antibody test we use is by Abbott which has been FDA EUA and PHE approved as well as CE marked.

   *FDA EUA- Food and Drug Administration Emergency Use Authorisation
   *PHE- Public Health England
   *CE- European Conformity Certification mark that indicates conformity with health, safety, and environmental protection standards

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WHICH TEST IS RIGHT FOR ME?

1) PCR swab test
This test is a swab, that looks for evidence of the active virus on swabs performed on your throat/ nose. This PCR test aims to detect the presence of the viral RNA, revealing whether there are currently active virus particles in the persons nose/ throat at the time of testing. It is 100% accurate and will tell us if the person tested currently has the virus. It can also tell us if the virus is present in someone's nose/ throat, even if they currently do not have any symptoms.

PLEASE NOTE: This test will only detect virus particles if they are present on the swab performed. If you have now recovered from your illness and your body has cleared the virus, or the swab has not been taken properly as per the instructions, then there may not be any of the virus on the swab and so will be reported as a negative rest result.

2) IgG Antibody Tests

This is a blood test, taken from a vein in your arm, that examines your blood for the presence of COVID-19 antibodies that your body has made in response to being exposed to the virus. The test we use is of a very high standard as it has been shown to be 100% sensitive in detecting antibodies 14 days after symptoms first start after being infected with COVID-19. It is 99.5% accurate in detecting if you have not been infected with COVID-19.

In Summary:

You should have the PCR swab:

- If your current symptoms are likely being caused by COVID-19
- If you, or your household members have been exposed to COVID-19 and have the virus currently in their noses and throats
- whether you/ your household need to self-isolate for 14 days and alert anyone you/ they have been in contact with
- If you are about to travel and need proof that you do not have COVID-19 infection

You should have the antibody test:

- If the illness/ fever you have had over 14 days ago was possibly caused by COVID-19

HOW WILL I GET MY RESULTS?

Our practice will contact you via email, or telephone if required, to explain and discuss you results. Results typically take 24-48 hours from when the sample is received in the laboratory.

WHAT IS THE COST OF THE TESTS?

Before we carry out any test, you will need to consult with one of our Doctors, at a cost of £160. This can be done in person, or if this is not possible because you are isolating in another area and is not practical for you to come in, then we can offer a video or telephone consultation.

PCR Swab Test: Consultation fee £160, plus swab test fee of £95 to £125
Antibody Test: Consultation fee £160, plus antibody test fee of £50

We are offering reduced rate for bookings of 2+.

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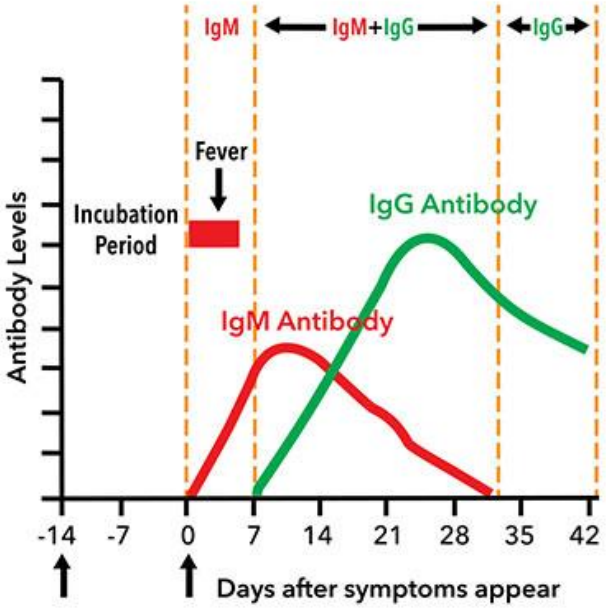
HOW DOES THE ANTIBODY TEST WORK?

This test examines your blood for antibodies that are specific to COVID-19. These antibodies are called Immunoglobulin G (IgG). IgG antibodies are made by your body in response to infection with COVID-19, and normally takes up to 14 days to appear in your blood. Your body also makes another antibody, called IgM, which is a general antibody that is produced by your body in response to any infection, and will typically appear at detectable levels in the first few days of an infection. Our test detects just IgG as it is specific to COVID-19, and reliably tells us if you have been infected with COVID-19 previously (see diagram below)



DOES HAVING A POSITIVE ANTIBODY TEST MEAN THAT I AM NOW IMMUNE TO COVID-19?

It is important to say there is still a lot we do not understand about this virus, and how immunity works. Even though this test is very accurate, we still do not know what having antibodies means yet. It is strongly recommended that even if you do have antibodies to COVID- 19, that you still continue to follow PHE advice about social distancing and virus avoidance until we know more about how immunity works for this virus.

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WHEN AM I INFECTIOUS?

Most people who are infected with COVID-19 develop mild symptoms. The most important symptoms of COVID-19 include:

- a new continuous cough
- A high temperature
- A loss/ change to your sense of smell and/or taste.

If you have been infected with COVID-19, it is believed that you can become infectious and pass on the virus from two days before symptoms begin. After developing symptoms, you should self-isolate at home for at least 7 days from when your symptoms started. After 7 days, or longer if you still have symptoms other than a cough of loss of smell/ taste, you must then continue to isolate until you feel better. At our practice, we can organise COVID-19 swab testing for you if you believe you have developed COVID-19 symptoms, by calling our practice.

If you have been a contact of somebody who has COVID-19, you should self-isolate at home for 14 days. It is important that you follow this advice even if you do feel well, as it can take up to 14 days from contact with COVID-19 for symptoms to develop.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE ABBOTT AND ROCHE TESTS?

The Roche and Abbot tests are very similar in its sensitivity and specificity. Sensitivity refer to how accurate the test is at detecting the virus in patients who test positive i.e. a true positive as oppose to a false positive (someone who has tested positive but does not have the virus). Specificity refer to how accurate the test is at detecting no virus in patients who test negative i.e. the true negative as oppose to a false negative (someone who has tested negative but has the virus)

Company	Test name	Date of FDA approval	EU status	Sensitivity %	Specificity %
Roche	Elecsys anti-Sars-CoV-2 antibody test	May 3 2020	CE marked	100	99.8
Abbott Laboratories	Abbott-Sars-CoV-2 IgG test	April 26 2020	CE Marked	100	99.5