

## **COVID-19 Testing Results**

### **Questions and Answers. By R. Levine, MD Medical Director GCHC**

You have been tested for COVID-19 (coronavirus test). This is the virus that is causing this widespread infection (pandemic) we are trying to keep from spreading.

In order to answer your questions about what your positive (or negative) coronavirus test actually means, this information sheet is provided to help you understand the results and what to do about it.

The coronavirus test you have recently had will either come back as a positive (meaning that the test found that you have the COVID-19 virus in your body detected by a swab test) or that your body is reacting to the virus (you have antibodies) to the COVID-19 virus. At the time you were tested, you either had no symptoms of COVID-19 or you were feeling ill with symptoms such as fever, body aches, cough, shortness of breath, chills, loss of sense of smell, the shakes, weakness, fatigue and other symptoms of feeling sick. Symptoms range from mild cold or flu symptoms that are manageable to severe cough and shortness of breath.

**DIFFERENCE BETWEEN COVID-19 AND THE FLU:** Of all the people who get the coronavirus, about 80% either have mild symptoms (which are symptoms that can be managed at home) or no symptoms at all (asymptomatic). About 15% have severe symptoms which require admission to the hospital and are usually given IV's and oxygen and about 5% become critically ill meaning that they require a breathing machine (ventilator) to survive. The percentage of people who die from COVID-19 is approximately 3-4%. This percentage is known as the mortality of COVID-19. By comparison, the seasonal flu has a mortality of less than 0.1%\*. The coronavirus spreads more easily than the flu as well.

**YOUR TEST** was either positive or negative. At the time you were tested, you had recently or were experiencing symptoms or you were without symptoms. There are two types of tests available for coronavirus. 1) The nasal swab test or 2) The blood test. The nasal swab test is to determine if there is coronavirus in your system. The blood test (known as serologic testing) is to determine if you have been exposed to the virus in the past. The blood test tells if you have antibodies to the coronavirus but does not tell us if you currently have an active infection. The presence of symptoms is very important in determining what you should do with the test results. In order to help you understand what YOUR test means as well as what to do about the results, a TEST RESULT INTERPRETATION grid is seen below. Find the test you had and the result along with whether you were experiencing symptoms before or at the time of your test. Follow the column to the right and read the box that is labeled "What the Test Means and What to Do about it". This should help you understand what your test means and what the next steps are for you. Remember, your Genesee Community Health Center Health Care Provider is here to help answer questions for you. The better you understand your test results, the easier it is for you to know what to do to keep yourself and others safe.

# GENESEE COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER TEST RESULTS EXPLANATION

2 tests (8 possible scenarios) by Robert C. Levine, MD

## TEST RESULT INTERPRETATION AND MEANING (R. Levine, MD)

Test Type	Results	What the Test Means and What to Do about it
<b>Nasal Swab</b> test for virus (Test for viral shedding) <i>With symptoms</i>	Positive (+)	You have active COVID-19 and are contagious. You <u>can</u> infect <u>another person</u> . You should self-quarantine for 14 days. You should seek medical care if you have trouble breathing or can't manage your symptoms at home.
<b>Nasal Swab</b> test for virus (Test for viral shedding) <i>Without symptoms</i>	Positive (+)	You have or are getting over a mild case of COVID-19 and are contagious. You currently <u>can</u> infect another person. You are considered a carrier for COVID-19 and should self-quarantine for 14 days.
<b>Nasal Swab</b> test for virus (Test for viral shedding) <i>With symptoms</i>	Negative (-)	You likely have a cold, flu or similar infection but it is not likely you COVID-19. You <u>cannot</u> infect others with COVID-19 but others can catch your cold or flu.
<b>Nasal Swab</b> test for virus (Test for viral shedding) <i>Without symptoms</i>	Negative (-)	You do not have COVID-19. You are not contagious and cannot transmit COVID-19 to others now. You can still be exposed and be infected with COVID-19 by others who have it.
<b>Blood test</b> for antibodies (serologic testing) <i>With symptoms</i>	Positive (+)	You have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 and have antibodies in your system. If your symptoms are consistent with COVID-19 then you probably are recovering from COVID-19
<b>Blood test</b> for antibodies (serologic testing) <i>Without symptoms</i>	Positive (+)	You have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 and have antibodies in your system. You have probably had COVID-19 in some form and are recovering. You do not need to self-quarantine unless you have a positive nasal swab test.
<b>Blood test</b> for antibodies (serologic testing) <i>With symptoms</i>	Negative (-)	You may have an early case of COVID-19 and have not yet developed antibodies or you may have a cold or flu causing your symptoms. It is advisable to get a nasal swab test to find out which one it is.
<b>Blood test</b> for antibodies (serologic testing) <i>Without symptoms</i>	Negative (-)	You do not have COVID-19 and you have not been exposed to others who have COVID-19. You can still be exposed and be infected with COVID-19 by others who have it.

While the media coverage of the coronavirus often paints a frightening picture, in actuality, caring for yourself or others who have COVID-19 doesn't look much different than it would for someone that has a cold or the flu. The two main differences between a cold and the flu is;

1) COVID-19 is much more contagious than a typical cold or flu. That means it can be transmitted to another person more easily than a regular cold or flu.

2) The coronavirus has the ability to make more people very sick. A cold is an upper respiratory infection that we typically refer to as the "snivels" and looks much like allergy symptoms only slightly worse. The flu is somewhat worse and may cause body aches, headache, fever along with the snivels. The flu can cause pneumonia and even death. Coronavirus is in the same category as the cold and flu viruses but it infects more easily and can cause a worse infection than the typical flu.