

Is it COVID, flu or RSV? New at-home test may tell

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Americans will soon be able to self-test at home to find out whether they

have COVID-19, the flu or another common germ, respiratory syncytial virus ([RSV](#)).

The first nonprescription [test](#) that can spot all three respiratory viral illnesses was approved Monday by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and will be available at retail stores or online.

"While the FDA has now authorized many [COVID-19 tests](#) without a prescription, this is the first test authorized for flu and RSV, along with COVID-19, where an individual can self-identify their need for a test, order it, collect their sample and send it to the lab for testing, without consulting a [health care](#) professional," Dr. Jeff Shuren said in an FDA news release. He directs the agency's Center for Devices and Radiological Health.

With the [polymerase chain reaction](#) (PCR) test from North Carolina-based Labcorp, users collect their own nasal swab sample at home and then ship it to one of the company's labs to be analyzed. Typical turnaround time for results is one to two days after the sample arrives at the lab, according to Labcorp, *NBC News* reported.

Other tests to detect multiple respiratory viruses typically require people to see a [health care provider](#), who collects the nasal swab sample and ships it to a lab for analysis.

The Labcorp test kit costs \$169, company spokesperson Chris Allman told *NBC News*.

That price isn't surprising since people are getting three tests in one, said Jennifer Smith, an epidemiologist at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Gillings School of Global Public Health.

She told *NBC News* that the new test is likely to increase access to

testing, particularly for people who may not be able to go into a clinic to get a test or for those don't feel comfortable getting tested.

COVID, flu and RSV cause tens of thousands of deaths a year and a test that detects all three is "sort of the Holy Grail," Dr. Michael Mina, a former Harvard epidemiologist, told *NBC News*. He's now the chief science officer for eMed, a company that provides telehealth and at-home testing services.

More information: Find out more about the new test at the [FDA](#).

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