

# Repeat testing with a rapid antigen test may be required to rule out SARS-CoV-2 infection

July 3 2023

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A prospective cohort study has found that repeat testing in 48-hour intervals with a rapid antigen test (Ag-RDT) may be required to rule out

SARS-CoV-2 infection. This means that people testing for SARS-CoV-2 should exercise caution in public settings despite an initial negative result if they suspect they may be infected or have been exposed. The findings are published in *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

Diagnostic testing for SARS-CoV-2 is an important component in the fight against COVID-19, with at-home [rapid tests](#) providing a convenient way for people to test. However, the performance of Ag-RDTs for screening asymptomatic and symptomatic persons for SARSCoV-2 is not well established.

Researchers from the University of Massachusetts Chan Medical School studied 5,353 participants who were asymptomatic and negative for SARS-CoV-2 after testing on day 1 to evaluate the performance of Ag-RDTs. Ag-RDTs were collected at home and reverse transcriptase polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) tests were shipped to a central laboratory for analysis.

The sensitivity of Ag-RDTs was measured on the basis of testing once (same-day), twice (after 48 hours), and thrice (after 96 hours). Using the PCR test as a comparison, the data showed that the performance of the rapid test was optimized when asymptomatic participants tested 3 times at 48-hour intervals and when symptomatic participants tested 2 times at the same interval. False-positive rates were low for rapid tests, suggesting that repeat testing is not needed for those obtaining a positive result on the first or second try. While testing, people should continue to practice mask wearing and social distancing until infection is ruled out.

**More information:** *Annals of Internal Medicine* (2023).  
[www.acpjournals.org/doi/10.7326/M23-0385](http://www.acpjournals.org/doi/10.7326/M23-0385)

Provided by American College of Physicians

Citation: Repeat testing with a rapid antigen test may be required to rule out SARS-CoV-2 infection (2023, July 3) retrieved 3 May 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-07-rapid-antigen-required-sars-cov-infection.html>

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