Medical Xpress

What can a COVID-19 antibody test tell us?

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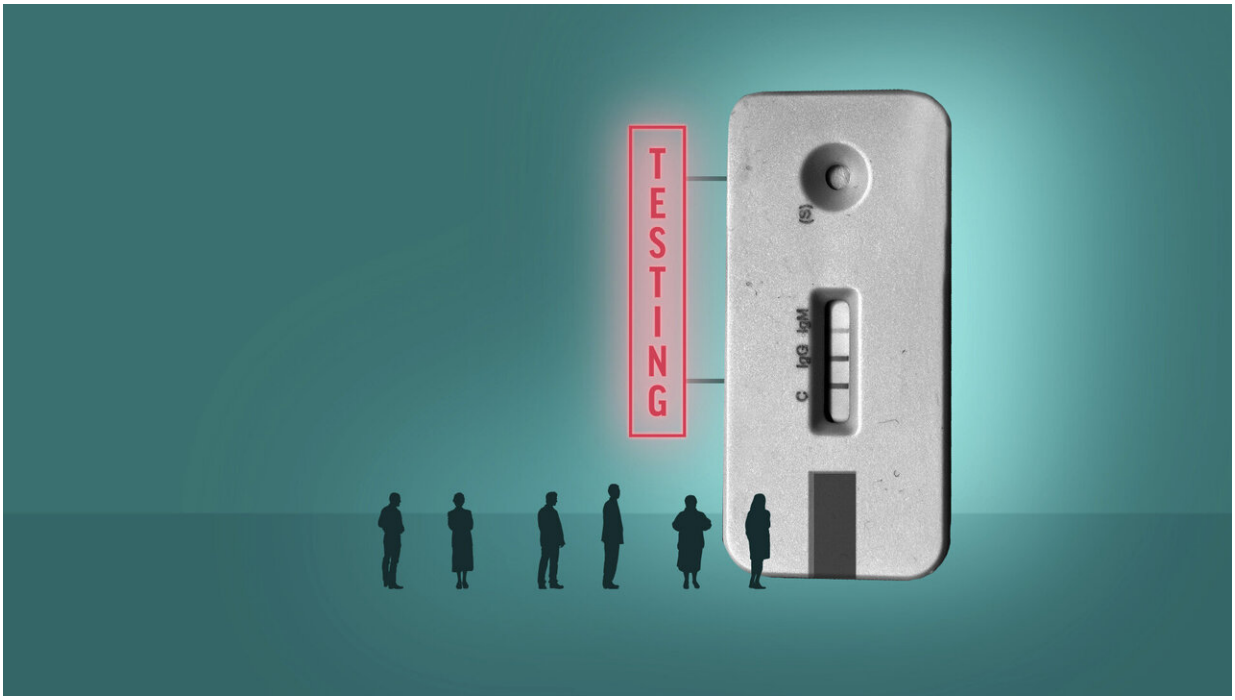

Illustration by Peter Hamlin

What can a COVID-19 antibody test tell me?

An antibody test might show if you had COVID-19 in the recent past, which most experts think gives people some protection from the virus. The tests are different from the nasal swab tests that determine if you're currently sick.

But studies are still underway to determine what antibody level would be needed for immunity. It's also not yet known how long any immunity might last. For now, the tests are most helpful for researchers trying to track how the virus spreads in communities.

Dozens of companies are making rapid antibody tests to help identify people who had the virus and may have developed some immunity to it.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration initially allowed companies to launch antibody tests with minimal oversight. After reports of faulty results and fraud emerged, the agency reversed course and is now requiring companies to show that their tests work.

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