



Frequently Asked Questions About Rhode Island COVID-19 Testing

Updated October 5, 2020



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Introduction:

The Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) is sharing these Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) to help answer common inquiries about how to get tested for Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).

This document is organized into five sections about COVID-19 testing:

- 1) General Information (pages 3 – 5)
- 2) Results (pages 5 – 7)
- 3) Testing for K-12 Students and Staff (pages 7 – 9)
- 4) Serology (Antibody) (pages 9 – 10)
- 5) Travel Information (pages 10 – 12)

Find easy-to-reference COVID-19 testing information on health.ri.gov:

- [COVID-19 Testing for the General Public](#)
- [Testing for Rhode Islanders without COVID-19 Symptoms](#)
- [Testing for K-12 Students and Staff](#)
- [COVID-19 Serology \(Antibody\) Testing](#)
- [Rhode Island COVID-19 Travel Information](#)

If you have additional questions, please visit our website at health.ri.gov/covid/testing or call the COVID-19 hotline at 401-222-8022 on weekdays 7:30 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. and on weekends 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., or call 2-1-1 after hours.

Public and private school students and staff can schedule a COVID-19 test and get information about test results by calling the K-12 COVID-19 test scheduling service at 844-857-1814 seven days a week from 7:30 a.m. – 9:30 p.m.



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General Information

1. Why is COVID-19 testing important in preventing the spread of the virus?

- Rhode Island's COVID-19 disease surveillance is a three-part, complete plan to create and expand testing in the state. This surveillance is important in determining how many Rhode Islanders may have COVID-19, helping the state to improve guidelines for businesses and industries, and prevent the spread of the virus.
- Testing is one part of the state's work to fight COVID-19. It is still very important for everyone to wear face masks or cloth face covers, wash their hands often, keep distance between themselves and others, and clean surfaces frequently.

2. Who should get tested for COVID-19?

The Rhode Island Department of Health recommends:

- **Testing for Rhode Islanders who have any COVID-19 symptoms.**
If you are experiencing any [symptoms](#) the CDC has identified for COVID-19, you will need to get tested.
- **Testing for Rhode Islanders who do not have COVID-19 symptoms (also called asymptomatic testing), including:**
 - High-contact workers
 - People who recently attended a large gathering such as a protest or demonstration
 - People between the ages of 18 and 39
- **Testing for travelers, including:**
 - Rhode Islanders planning to travel to a state that requires a COVID-19 test in order to avoid extended quarantine.
 - Recent out-of-state travelers from states with a COVID-19 positivity rate greater than 5%.
- **Please note:** Most testing sites will not test people who do not have an appointment already set up.

3. What qualifies as a high-contact profession?

- Asymptomatic testing is available to high-contact workers, including but not limited to:
 - Barbers



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- Child care workers
- Clergy
- Cosmetologists
- First Responders
- Gym and exercise trainers
- Healthcare professionals
- Personal care services (nail technicians, massage therapists, tattoo artists, estheticians, cosmeticians, manicurists, body piercers, and tanning facility staff)
- Public transit drivers
- Restaurant workers

4. I don't have any COVID-19 symptoms but I am eligible to get a COVID-19 test. How do I schedule an asymptomatic test?

- Rhode Islanders who do not have symptoms can schedule a test online at portal.ri.gov or call **401-222-8022** weekdays from 7:30 a.m.- 7:00 p.m. and weekends from 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. You may also call 2-1-1 after hours. You can ask to connect with an interpreter if needed.
- **There will be no charge associated with asymptomatic testing.** People will be tested regardless of their immigration status, and regardless of whether they have health insurance. To learn more, visit RIDOH's webpage on [asymptomatic testing](#).
- You can also schedule an asymptomatic test through a community-based testing center by contacting them directly. Contact information for community-based testing locations is listed [here](#).

5. What should I do if I have any COVID-19 symptoms?

- If you think you have COVID-19 and feel like you have symptoms, you should first call a primary care provider or a respiratory clinic to talk about your symptoms and get scheduled for a test. Many primary care providers can test their patients on site. You should not go directly to a healthcare facility without calling a healthcare provider first. If you are experiencing a medical emergency, then call 9-1-1.
- To find a respiratory clinic near you, visit RIDOH's COVID-19 Testing for the General Public [webpage](#).



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6. I don't have a primary care provider. Does that mean I can't get tested?

- You can still get tested for COVID-19 even if you do not have a primary care provider. There are places like urgent care centers, community health centers, and community-based clinics across the state that are taking new patients. These healthcare facilities are sometimes called "respiratory clinics." They offer on-site health evaluations as well as on-site COVID-19 testing. Many offer drive-up and walk-up testing options. Here is a [list](#) of these facilities.
- Be sure to call first to schedule an appointment. Do not go directly to one of these clinics if you think you have COVID-19. If you are experiencing a medical emergency, then call 9-1-1.
- More information about places to get tested is available on the RIDOH website at health.ri.gov/covid/testing.

7. I have COVID-19 symptoms and I don't have transportation. I've heard that some cities in Rhode Island have walk-up COVID-19 testing sites. Is this true?

Yes. There are many walk-up testing sites available for people with any COVID-19 symptoms. For the most up-to-date list of walk-up test sites, please visit RIDOH's COVID-19 Testing for the General Public [webpage](#) and view the list under "If you don't have transportation."

8. Can I get tested for COVID-19 if I don't have health insurance?

Yes. There are [several options](#) to get a free COVID-19 test, regardless of your health insurance or immigration status. Many [of these sites](#) offer drive-up and walk-up testing options. When you make an appointment, confirm that the site provides free testing and related services for people without health insurance, regardless of immigration status.

COVID-19 Test Results

9. How long will I have to wait to get the results of my COVID-19 test?

- Although test result times are improving, it still might take several days to get your test results. [Test result turnaround time varies](#) by testing location. If you have symptoms of COVID-19, stay at home and isolate yourself to avoid spreading your symptoms to others in your household. If you do not have symptoms but think you may have been exposed to COVID-19 or are recently returning from travel to a state with a COVID-19 positivity rate greater than 5%, quarantine while you wait for your results.



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- The turnaround time on test results depends on several factors, including the laboratory conducting the testing and the time a specimen is collected and transported to the lab. Test results may be delayed for several reasons. For example, if the specimen is sent to an out-of-state commercial lab, labeled incorrectly, or information is missing, this could delay the processing time. Some delays may also be due to heightened national demand for testing supplies such as reagents.

10. How do I get my COVID-19 test results?

- If you were tested because you have symptoms, the primary care provider who ordered the test will notify you of the results.
- If you scheduled a test on portal.ri.gov, you can get your test result by creating an account on the Dominion Diagnostics [patient portal](#). Please wait 48 hours from the time of your test to register for this portal. This allows time for the lab to receive and process your information.
- If you were tested at the Block Island Fire and Rescue Barn, you can get your test results by visiting Eastside Clinical Laboratory's patient portal at www.eastsidelab.com/sonicmyaccess, or by texting "ESCL" to 66349.
- If you scheduled a test at a community-based testing site, you will need to follow their instructions for your test result information.
- If you have any questions about COVID-19 testing or your results, call the COVID-19 hotline at 401-222-8022, weekdays 7:30 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. and weekends 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. for help.

11. What happens if my test result is positive?

- Your name and contact information will be shared with public health staff at the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) to help with case investigation.
- Someone from the Department of Health will call you and ask you for a list of people you have had close contact with during your infectious period.
- [Stay at home](#), wash your hands frequently, wear a face mask (or a cloth face covering if a mask is not available), stay away from other people in your home, and clean "high-touch" surfaces" (doorknobs, railings, phones, counters, faucet handles) every day.
- If you tested positive for COVID-19 and never had symptoms, you must isolate for 10 days from the date of your positive test.



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- Refer to the [Department of Health website](#) for information about when you can leave your home.
- If any of your symptoms get worse, call your healthcare provider.

12. Can someone receive a false negative test result if it is taken too early?

- Yes, it is possible. Someone may test negative if the sample was collected early into the infection and then test positive later during the illness.
- See the Test for Current Infection [webpage](#) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

13. What happens if I never had any COVID-19 symptoms, get a COVID-19 test, and test negative?

- If you start having any symptoms of COVID-19 after the test, call your healthcare provider and ask if you should be tested again.
- Wash your hands often and practice social distancing (six feet between you and other people).
- Wear a [cloth face covering](#) when you leave your house.
- If you are sick, stay home from work.
- Clean “high-touch” surfaces” (e.g., doorknobs, railings, phones, counters, faucet handles) every day.
- If you test negative for COVID-19, you most likely were not infected at the time of your test. It is also possible that you were tested very early in your infection and you could test positive later. Or you could be exposed later and get sick. This means that even with a negative test, it is important for healthcare workers and others who work with vulnerable populations to stay home from work while experiencing any symptoms.

COVID-19 Testing for K-12 Students and Staff

14. Who should get tested?

- Students or staff members who have COVID-19 [symptoms](#) should schedule a test.



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- Students or staff members who are told they were a close contact of someone else who tested positive for COVID-19 should also get tested. A close contact is someone who was closer than six feet for more than 15 minutes.
- Pre K students and staff must be part of a Pre K program that is associated with an elementary school to be eligible for this testing program.
- More information about testing for K-12 students and staff is available [here](#).

15. How can K-12 students and staff get a COVID-19 test?

- There are places all around the state where students and staff of public and private K-12 schools can get a free test. Those sites are listed [here](#).
- To schedule an appointment, parents, guardians, staff members, and students older than 16 can call the K-12 COVID-19 test scheduling service at 844-857-1814 seven days a week from 7:30 a.m. – 9:30 p.m.

16. How will I get my/my child's test results?

- Anyone who has symptoms will get two tests. The first is a rapid test and you will get the result of this test at the end of the day. The second is a PCR test and you will get the result of this test in two days (48 hours.)
- Students and staff who do not have symptoms but have been identified as a close contact of a positive case will get the PCR test only.
- Students and staff who have an appointment for a rapid test before 3 p.m. will be notified of the result in the same day. Results from test appointments after 3 p.m. will be ready the following morning. You can also call the K-12 test scheduling service for the results of your test. Please wait 8-12 hours after your test appointment to call for the result of your rapid test.
- You will receive the results of your PCR test on the Dominion Diagnostics [patient portal](#). Please wait 48 hours from the time of your test to sign up for this portal. If you have not received the results of this test in two days, call the K-12 test scheduling service.

17. What should students and staff members do while they wait for their test results?

- If you have symptoms, isolate yourself from other people in your home as much as possible while you wait for your results.



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- If you are a close contact and do not have symptoms, stay home and follow quarantine guidance while you wait for your results.
- Guidance about quarantine and isolation can be found on this [page](#).

18. What happens if a student or staff member tests positive?

- Anyone who tests positive for COVID-19 needs to isolate for at least 10 days. After 10 days, you can return to school or work if you have been fever-free for 24 hours without using a fever-reducing medicine, and if symptoms have improved.
- If you tested positive but do not have symptoms, you must isolate for 10 days after you had your COVID-19 test.
- A case investigator will call you to talk about what you need to do. Anything you tell the case investigator is confidential and is only used for public health purposes. RIDOH will also talk with your school district to decide if any other people need to quarantine.

19. What happens if a student or staff member tests negative?

- If the result of your rapid test is negative, you must stay in isolation while you wait for the result of your PCR test. If the result of your PCR test is negative, you can go back to work or school after symptoms have improved and you have been fever-free for 24 hours without using a fever-reducing medicine. Do not go to work or school if you feel sick.
- If RIDOH identified you as a close contact of a positive case, you need to complete your 14-day quarantine period even if your PCR test result is negative. You must quarantine for 14 days from the date of close contact and monitor yourself for symptoms.

Serology (Antibody) Testing

20. What are serology (antibody) tests?

- A serology test, or antibody test, is one way to learn how a disease affects a community. These tests involve testing participants' blood for antibodies, special proteins produced in response to an infection. A sample of blood as well as an individual's participation in a survey can help us better understand COVID-19, including how the body responds to the virus, how often the virus causes an infection with symptoms, frequency of specific symptoms, and risk factors for disease.



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Antibody tests can also help us estimate how many people may have already been infected with the virus. Additionally, the information we learn could help in the development of treatments and vaccines and other prevention tools.

21. Are serology tests being done in Rhode Island?

- Serology tests are available to Rhode Islanders through participating primary care providers or respiratory clinics. Talk with a provider to learn more.

22. What are antibodies?

- Antibodies are special proteins that the body makes to help fight off infections. They are made in response to an infection. They can be produced even if a person has few or no symptoms. It generally takes some time after an infection for antibodies to be produced and become detectable in blood. Antibodies are generally detectable after a person has recovered from the infection.
- Sometimes antibodies protect us from getting the same infection again; however, we do not know whether this is true for COVID-19. We also do not yet know how quickly antibodies are produced when someone has COVID-19 or about likely differences in the amount and type of antibodies people produce in response to infection. Antibodies are only part of the complex immune system in our bodies that works to fight off infections.

23. Are antibody tests effective?

- These tests are important for public health; however, they are difficult to interpret for personal health. A positive or negative antibody test should not change a person's efforts to prevent COVID-19, and test results should not be used to decide whether or not you go to work.
- Continue to prevent the spread of COVID-19 by continuing to wear appropriate protection at your workplace, clean your hands often, wear face coverings, and maintain six feet of physical distance when possible.

COVID-19 Travel Information

24. I plan to travel to Rhode Island. Do I need to quarantine when I arrive?

- Rhode Island requires any person coming to Rhode Island for non-work-related purposes from a location with high community spread to quarantine for 14 days upon arrival. As an



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exception, you may provide proof of a negative test result taken within 72 hours prior to arrival.

- The purpose of these restrictions is to allow time for travelers from locations with [high community spread](#) to start quarantining and self-monitor for symptoms during the 14 days that COVID-19 can develop after exposure, and to prevent hundreds of people in the public from being unknowingly exposed, including tourists.
- RIDOH requires out-of-state visitors to complete this [certificate of compliance](#) and this [out-of-state travel screening form](#).
- RIDOH recommends that people get tested for COVID-19 in their home state, if possible. People visiting Rhode Island from out-of-state can find a place for asymptomatic testing on the [RIDOH COVID-19 travel information webpage](#).

25. Who do I show my negative test result and certificate of compliance to when I arrive in Rhode Island?

- Travelers may be asked to provide their negative test result and/or certificate of compliance to staff at their lodging and accommodations upon check-in. Please have these materials easily accessible either on a mobile device or as a hard copy.

26. I am a Rhode Islander who anticipates traveling to a state that has quarantine/testing restrictions in place. Can I get tested?

- Rhode Islanders planning to travel out of state should check to see if there are any quarantine/testing requirements in place at their destination. Some states require that visitors provide proof of a negative test result taken within 72 hours prior to their arrival.
- Rhode Island residents who anticipate traveling out of state are eligible to schedule a free test through portal.ri.gov. For guidance on how to integrate COVID-19 testing into your itinerary, review [this document](#).
- You can get your test result by creating an account on the Dominion Diagnostics [patient portal](#). Please wait 48 hours from the time of your test to register for this portal. This allows time for the lab to receive and process your information.



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27. I am a Rhode Island resident returning home after out-of-state travel. What should I do?

- Rhode Island residents who return home after traveling to a state with a [high rate of community spread](#) should quarantine for 14 days. You can also schedule a COVID-19 test, but you must remain in quarantine while you wait for your results.
- If you receive a test during your quarantine in Rhode Island and get a negative test result, you can stop quarantining. However, you still need to self-monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 for 14 days, wear a mask in public, and follow physical distancing guidelines.
- If you return to Rhode Island and begin to experience symptoms of COVID-19, contact your primary care provider or a respiratory clinic to schedule a test.

28. How much does a travel-related COVID-19 test cost?

- Rhode Islanders can book a free traveler's test through portal.ri.gov.
- Rhode Island is not offering free testing to out-of-state travelers at this time. The individual being tested or their insurance would be billed for the testing.

29. I am arriving to Rhode Island after international travel. What should I do?

- People who arrive in Rhode Island after traveling out of the country are required to quarantine for 14 days.
- International travelers may not provide proof of a negative test result to end quarantine early. You must complete the 14-day quarantine and self-monitor for symptoms.
- If symptoms develop, call a primary care provider or a respiratory clinic.

30. Who is exempt from travel-related quarantine/testing requirements?

- Per executive order, these quarantine/testing requirements do not apply to public health, public safety, or healthcare workers, people traveling for medical treatment, to attend a funeral or memorial service, to obtain necessities such as groceries, gas, or medication, to drop off or pick up children from day care or summer camps, or to anyone who must work on their boat.
- Children are not exempt from these quarantine/testing requirements.
- Anyone who has symptoms of COVID-19 should avoid travel, stay home, and call their primary care provider or a respiratory clinic.