Frequently Asked Questions About Rhode Island COVID-19 Testing

Updated December 10, 2020
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 four sections about COVID-19 testing:

1) General Information (pages 3 – 5)
2) Test Results (pages 5 – 7)
3) Testing for K-12 and Child Care Students and Staff (pages 7 – 9)
4) Travel Information (pages 9 – 11)

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

- COVID-19 Testing for People with Symptoms
- Testing for Rhode Islanders without COVID-19 Symptoms
- Testing for K-12 and Child Care Students and Staff
- 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.

Rhode Islanders can schedule a COVID-19 test online at portal.ri.gov or by calling 401-222-8022. A test for a child younger than 16 can be scheduled through a parent or guardian’s portal account.

Students and staff at K-12 public and private schools or in family or center-based child care programs can schedule a COVID-19 test by calling 844-857-1814 between the hours of 7:30 a.m. and 9:30 p.m. or by creating an account on portal.ri.gov.

Anyone tested for COVID-19 in the State of Rhode Island can access results on portal.ri.gov/results.
General Information

1. Who should get tested for COVID-19?

COVID-19 testing is available to all Rhode Islanders through portal.ri.gov.

The Rhode Island Department of Health recommends:

- Testing for Rhode Islanders who have any COVID-19 symptoms.
- Testing for people who may have been exposed to COVID-19.
- Testing for Rhode Islanders who do not have COVID-19 symptoms (also called asymptomatic testing), this includes but is not limited to:
  - 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%.

2. How do I schedule a COVID-19 test?

- Rhode Islanders can self-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. Services are available in multiple languages.
- There will be no charge associated with tests scheduled at State-operated sites. People will be tested regardless of their immigration status or whether they have health insurance.
- Primary care providers can use RIDOH’s online test ordering system to schedule a COVID-19 test on behalf of a patient. Some primary care providers can also test their patients on site.
- You can also schedule a test through a community-based testing center by contacting them directly. Contact information for community-based testing locations is listed here. There may be a cost associated with testing at some of these locations.
- Use RIDOH’s COVID-19 Test Site Locator to find a test site near you.
- **Please note:** Most testing sites will not test people who do not have an appointment already set up.

3. What should I do if I have any COVID-19 symptoms?
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- Rhode Islanders experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 or who may have been exposed to the virus should isolate at home, call their primary care provider if they have one, and schedule a test.
- Do not go directly to a healthcare facility or testing site without calling or making an appointment online first. If you are experiencing a medical emergency, then call 9-1-1.

4. Should I get tested if I am a close contact of someone who tests positive?

Quarantine if you have been in close contact with someone with COVID-19. Close contact means you’ve been within 6 feet of someone with COVID-19 for a total of 15 minutes in a 24-hour period.

- Quarantine for 10 days from your last known exposure.
- You may shorten your quarantine to seven days if you have a negative result from a test taken five days or more after you were exposed.

If you have been directed to quarantine, watch for symptoms for 14 days. If you get symptoms of COVID-19, isolate at home, call your healthcare provider, and get a COVID-19 test. Learn more at health.ri.gov/covid/whattodo.

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

- You can still get tested for COVID-19 through portal.ri.gov even if you do not have a primary care provider or if you do not have insurance.
- There are also 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.

6. 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.”

7. 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. The State of Rhode Island will cover the cost of COVID-19 testing for anyone without insurance who schedules on portal.ri.gov. 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.

8. What kind of COVID-19 test will be used at the test site?

- There are several kinds of COVID-19 tests being used in Rhode Island. The most common test used at State-operated test sites is the PCR test. This type of test usually results in about two to four days. Since most states with travel restrictions require proof of a negative result from a PCR test, this type of test is specifically recommended to anyone who must travel.
- Anyone with symptoms who is tested at a K-12 site will receive a rapid test and a PCR test. Close contacts and classmates who do not have symptoms will receive the PCR test only.
- The State recently received a supply of BinaxNOW tests, a type of rapid test that usually results in about 15 minutes. These test kits are being used at mobile testing sites throughout the State. BinaxNOW tests are also available to the general public at the test site in the Dunkin’ Donuts Center. Appointments are required and can be made on portal.ri.gov.

COVID-19 Test Results

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

- You can access your results at portal.ri.gov/results within two to four days after your test. You will be asked to enter your personal information and the date you were tested. The information you enter must match the information used to schedule your test. You will get an error message if you try to access this portal before your results are ready.
- This step-by-step guide has tips on how to use the result portal.
• 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.

10. 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. 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.
• 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.

11. What happens if my test result is positive?
• Your name and contact information will be shared with public health staff at 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.
• 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.
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.

Testing for K-12 and Child Care Students and Staff

14. Who should get tested through the K-12 testing program?

The K-12 testing program is for students and staff at public and private K-12 schools or family and center-based child care programs. Students and staff members can get tested through this program if they:

- Have COVID-19 symptoms;
- Were identified as close contact of someone else who tested positive;
- Are a classmate or teacher of someone who tested positive.

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?

See the Test for Current Infection webpage from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
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- 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. or create an account on portal.ri.gov.
- 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.

16. Can parents and other family members also be tested through the K-12 testing program?
- Currently, the K-12 testing program is only for students and staff in K-12 schools and childcare settings. Family members who would like to get tested can self-schedule an appointment on portal.ri.gov.

17. What kind of COVID-19 test will I get?
- 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 classmate or a close contact of a positive case will get the PCR test only.

18. How will I get my/my child’s test results?
- You will receive an email notification when your COVID-19 test results are ready. Results can be accessed at portal.ri.gov/results. You will be asked to enter your personal information and the date you were tested. The information you enter must match the information used to schedule your test. You will get an error message if you try to access this portal before your results are ready.
- Students and staff with symptoms who have an appointment before 3 p.m. will get the result of their rapid test in the same day. Rapid results from test appointments after 3 p.m. will be ready the following morning. PCR test results are usually ready in two days.
- If you have questions about K-12 test results, you can call 844-857-1814. Please wait 8-12 hours after your test appointment to call for the result of your rapid test and 48 hours to call for the result of your PCR test.

19. 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 results.
• If you are a close contact and do not have symptoms, stay home and follow quarantine guidance while you wait for your results.
• Information about quarantine and isolation can be found on this page.

20. 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.

21. 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 the person tested is the close contact of a positive case, they may shorten their quarantine period to seven days if they receive a negative result from a test taken five days or more after their date of exposure.

COVID-19 Travel Information

22. I plan to travel to Rhode Island. Do I need to quarantine when I arrive?
• Rhode Island requires any person arriving for non-work-related purposes from a location with high community spread to quarantine for 14 days upon arrival. As an exception, you may provide proof of a negative result from a PCR test taken within 72 hours prior to arrival.
• Anyone arriving after international travel cannot test out of quarantine.
• 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...
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that COVID-19 can develop after exposure, and to prevent hundreds of people in the public from being unknowingly exposed, including tourists.

- Anyone who has symptoms of COVID-19 should avoid travel, stay home, and call their primary care provider or a respiratory clinic.

23. Do I need to fill out any forms before I arrive in Rhode Island?

- Anyone traveling to Rhode Island is required to complete this certificate of compliance and this out-of-state travel screening form.
- 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.

24. 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 will receive an email notification when your COVID-19 test results are ready. You can access your results at portal.ri.gov/results two days after your test. You will be asked to enter your personal information and the date you were tested. The information you enter must match the information used to schedule your test. You will get an error message if you try to access this portal before your results are ready. You can print or screenshot your test result so you may easily access it during your travels.

25. 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 on portal.ri.gov, 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.

26. 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.

27. 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 to discuss your symptoms.

28. 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. A parent or guardian can use their own account to schedule a COVID-19 test for a child. Children older than 16 should create their own account.