



FAQs ON COVID-19 DIAGNOSTICS

What is the purpose of a COVID-19 test?

The purpose is to detect the SARS-CoV-2, a new strain of coronavirus that causes the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). The test is used to determine whether a person is currently infected with this virus that causes COVID-19.

What is the method of testing for COVID-19 in Nigeria?

Reverse transcriptase polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) also known as nucleic acid amplification tests. This is used to confirm the presence of the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

How is Nigeria currently testing for COVID-19?

Nigeria is using reverse transcriptase polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) for the testing of COVID-19. Though rigorous, it is currently the most reliable method for the laboratory confirmation of COVID-19 given its high sensitivity rate. PCR tests directly detect the presence of the virus in the body. This means that a PCR test can tell if a person has the virus very early on and is best for prompt detection and isolation of cases.

Why is Nigeria not using rapid test kits?

Currently, there is no rapid test kit validated by the World Health Organization (WHO). While rapid test kits can give results in under an hour, they are not as accurate as PCR. Two types of rapid diagnostic tests (RDTs) are being developed globally; those that determine whether a person has been infected and those that determine active infection. NCDC will prioritise the use of RDTs that detect active infection once validated RDTs become available.

How does testing detect COVID-19?

Molecular tests, also known "Nucleic acid amplification tests," detect the presence of the virus in samples obtained from patients. This method can only diagnose someone with COVID-19 if they are actively infected even if they are not showing symptoms.

What type of samples are collected for a test?



A trained health worker from the state, wearing a personal protective equipment uses swab (like a long Q-tip) to collect sample from the back of the nose or back of the throat from a suspected case of COVID-19. After collection, swabs are placed in a transport tube, carefully packaged, and transported to the nearest laboratory within the NCDC laboratory network for testing.

Why is Nigeria not using the pooling strategy with PCR?

While pooled PCR testing enables mass testing for COVID-19, this method is effective when infection rate is low and only a few people are infected. By pooling, samples from several individuals are collected and tested together. If the results from the pooled samples come out negative, all samples are assumed to be negative. However, if the pool result is positive, all samples will be tested individually. Currently, Nigeria is recording a high rate of infection and would not benefit from this method.

What happens if my state does not have a laboratory?



For states that do not have a laboratory, samples are transported to the nearest state with a laboratory for testing of COVID-19. However, the NCDC is working hard to ensure that there is a laboratory for the testing of COVID-19 in each state. This will enhance access to testing and shorten the time for confirmation of result. Currently, the turnaround time is between 48-96hours.



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Do people have to pay to get tested?

No. Testing conducted through a laboratory within the NCDC network is offered free of charge.



Where do people go to get tested?

If you are showing known symptoms of COVID-19 or believe you are a close contact of a confirmed case, call your state helpline. The state officials will advise on the nearest testing centre or advise if a trained health worker will come to you to collect your sample. The NCDC has created a directory of all state helplines which can be accessed via <https://covid19.ncdc.gov.ng/contact/>

What should I do while awaiting my result?

One of the most important things to remember while awaiting your test result is that you need to protect your loved ones. While awaiting your results, it is important to self-isolate from friends and family. Practice frequent hand washing; wear a face mask to limit the spread of infection to your loved ones and others; and ensure the home environment is properly and frequently cleaned with disinfectant. If you test positive or negative for COVID-19, you must continue to adhere to preventive measures as recommended by the Federal Ministry of Health and the NCDC.

