

## **Basic Messaging for the Public around Limits and Concerns Related to COVID-19**

### **Limits and Concerns regarding antibody testing:**

**Most available antibody tests have not been sufficiently tested** to understand how accurate or inaccurate they are. It will be a while before we know how to interpret them.

- Some may be good and others junk.
- Mistakes could be made by trusting these- test too much before they are proven.
- One antibody test alone should not be used to make health care decisions.

**There are a variety of tests from many companies. Each of these tests are different**, so we cannot assume one test will be as accurate as another.

- Tests from mainland China that have not been examined by the FDA should be used with caution (if at all).
- New tests should be checked out carefully to understand what the results actually mean.

**A positive antibody test means the person has been exposed** to a coronavirus, but it **doesn't tell you much about the timing**.

- **It means he/she was exposed 10 or more days ago.**
- It probably takes at least 10 days after exposure for antibodies to develop, but could take several weeks to turn positive.
- We do not yet know how long these antibodies stay around.
- We do not yet know if these antibodies protect you from re-infection.
- Different antibody tests may measure different antibodies and give varying results.

**Some antibody tests may turn positive even if the person was not exposed** to the Covid 19 virus.

- There are many **other coronaviruses** besides the Covid-19 virus that cause respiratory symptoms in humans.
- Other coronaviruses may cause the Covid-19 tests to be falsely positive. Coronaviruses have common parts so sometimes antibodies may recognize those parts instead of what's unique to the virus of concern. This needs to be determined.

**One positive antibody test does not mean a person is free of infection, and he/she could still be infectious.**

- Some infected patients will still be infectious for several days after their antibody test turns positive.
- We need more data but a person may have been infectious perhaps 2-4 days after antibodies appeared based on one study.

**A positive antibody test does not guarantee immunity.**

- It is still unknown what degree of protection from future infection exists for recovered individuals and how long such protection might last.

**Someone with a negative antibody test may still be infectious**, because immunity can take 10 or more days to develop.

**Single antibody tests cannot be used by itself to diagnose Covid-19 infection.** The diagnosis is made by a clinician looking at multiple factors.

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At present we do not have enough information to be able to use a single antibody test to decide who could return to work.

- It may be possible that two positive tests 1 week apart would indicate that a person is non-infectious.
- In the future there may be better antibody tests that would indicate someone is non-infectious

### **Limits and Concerns regarding PCR testing:**

**A positive PCR test with symptoms** is a good indication the person has Covid-19.

- The person is infectious and needs to isolate.
- Persons with symptoms are presumed to be infectious to others.

**A positive PCR test without symptoms** may mean the person has a mild infection, and may be able to spread it to others. These individuals should isolate.

**A positive PCR test** does not necessarily mean the person is still infectious to others.

- The PCR test may stay positive for days to weeks after a person is no longer infectious. This is because the test can detect small fragments left over from dead viruses.

**A negative test after recovering from illness** is probably good evidence the person is no longer infectious.

**A negative PCR test** could be due to a poorly collected specimen—the swab must collect enough cells from the back portion of the nose and throat to detect the virus.

**A negative PCR test** could be seen early in infection.

- One could have a negative PCR test during the early stages of infection, only to have a positive test a day or two later.
- There is a period of about a couple days between exposure and development of a positive test.