

COVID-19 Testing in California

What You Need to Know



Get tested and keep your friends, family & community safe.

When should I get tested?

You should immediately get tested for COVID-19 **if you are feeling any [symptoms](#)** – regardless of your vaccination status. COVID-19 symptoms can feel like a common cold (including just “the sniffles”), seasonal allergies, or flu. COVID testing in California is free to anyone who needs it.

- If you’ve been exposed to COVID-19 and are **not [fully vaccinated](#)**, get tested right away. If you test negative, retest 5-7 days after your exposure date. Those who are unvaccinated should also test 1-3 days before and 3-5 days after any high-risk events.
- If you were fully vaccinated when exposed, you should get tested 5-7 days after [close contact](#) with someone who has recently tested positive.
- If you have recovered from COVID-19 in the last 3 months and have had no new symptoms since your recent exposure, you do not need to get tested.
- Traveling? Read our [travel fact sheet](#).
- Read our full testing guidance. (Your school or workplace may have their own testing requirements.)

Where can I get tested?

You can book a free test appointment, find a walk-in test clinic, or buy a self-test kit from your local drugstore. [Find a testing site online](#) or call (833) 422-4255 or 211. Visit covid19.ca.gov to learn more. Learn more about [types of COVID tests](#).

COVID-19 can feel like a common cold or allergies:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste
- New loss of smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion
- Runny nose
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea



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Is testing in California free to everyone who needs it?

Yes. There are no out-of-pocket costs for medically necessary testing. The testing provider will bill your insurance directly. Testing is free at [state testing sites](#).

Should I worry about my immigration status?

No. Testing sites will not ask you about your immigration status.

How long will it take to get my test results?

Test results are usually ready in 2-3 days.

What should I do as I wait for my results?

If you have symptoms or have been in close contact with someone with COVID-19, you should quarantine to avoid spreading the disease. If you must be in contact with other people, including your household, always wear a mask and practice physical distancing. If you test positive, you will be given further guidance on treatment and self-isolation from your local health department.

What support does California provide during COVID isolation or quarantine?

People who can't work due to having COVID-19 or being near someone with the illness can [file a Disability Insurance \(DI\) claim](#) if they have a note from a healthcare worker. People who can't work because they are caring for an ill or quarantined family member with COVID-19 can [file a Paid Family Leave \(PFL\) claim](#) to help with lost wages. They must have a note from a healthcare workers.



Tested positive for COVID-19?

Help stop the spread by answering the call or text from your health department. Also, if you have CA Notify activated on your phone, choose to anonymously alert those you may have exposed. For more information, visit canotify.ca.gov.



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