

## BILH Guidance on Viral Testing for COVID-19

This guidance outlines indications for viral testing for COVID-19 (PCR and home antigen) – including indications, test selection and acceptability criteria, and retesting.

### 1. Test indications for COVID-19

- **Symptomatic patients**

Patients with at least one of the following symptoms should be tested for COVID-19:

- Fever  $\geq 100.4$  or feverishness
- Chills
- Muscle or body aches
- Cough
- New onset shortness of breath, or change from baseline
- Sore throat
- Headache
- New loss of smell or taste
- New nasal congestion or runny nose
- New onset diarrhea, or change from baseline
- New onset nausea or vomiting, or change from baseline

- **Asymptomatic patients**

Patients with known exposure to someone with confirmed COVID-19 infection

- **Any patient**

Per clinician discretion

#### Exceptions

- Patients meeting [Prior COVID-19 status](#) (i.e., a positive test for COVID-19 in the prior 90 days) should generally not be retested if asymptomatic except in the setting of exposure
- Patients who are [COVID-19 Positive](#) and not yet meeting criteria for discontinuation of isolation (for [immune competent](#) or [immune compromised](#)) should not be retested routinely

### 2. Choosing which test to use

- **Inpatients:**

- Perform COVID-19 PCR, if meeting indications above
- Accept positive COVID-19 home antigen tests [meeting acceptability criteria](#) performed in the 10 days prior to admission

- **Ambulatory patients:**

- COVID-19 PCR
- COVID-19 home antigen test [meeting acceptability criteria](#)

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### 3. Retesting

- In **symptomatic patients who had a positive test within the prior 90 days** (i.e., [Prior COVID-19 status](#)), new infection is less likely though possible.
  - Consider alternate diagnoses, particularly if initial infection was <30 days prior.
  - If diagnosis remains unclear, consider testing for COVID-19, especially if within 31-90 days after initial infection. Positive results may require clinical interpretation.
  - While evaluation is in progress, isolation precautions should be used in the healthcare setting based on suspected disease processes (e.g., COVID-19, TB, norovirus, *C. difficile*)
- Retesting of **asymptomatic patients** is not recommended within the 90 days after a COVID-19 positive viral test
  - [If COVID-19 rebound](#) is suspected (with or without antiviral treatment), no retesting is necessary and the patient should be placed back on [COVID-19 Positive](#) status and the period of isolation restarted from the date of symptom rebound.
- In **symptomatic patients who had a positive test more than 90 days prior**, new infection is possible and repeat COVID-19 viral testing is recommended.
  - Isolation precautions for COVID-19 are required during evaluation ([COVID-19 Suspect status](#)) and with a positive test result ([COVID-19 Positive status](#))