

May 25, 2020

COVID Antibody Testing Information for Patients

The COVID-19 antibody testing was developed during the COVID-19 pandemic, so right now, there is not a lot of data available to understand what the results mean.

An antibody test measures the amount of an antibody, or markers of infection, in your body. There are two types of antibodies we look at when ordering an antibody test. One is called the IgM antibody, which is a marker for **current** infection. The other is the IgG antibody, which is a marker for **prior** infection.

For a patient who had COVID-19, we would expect them to have a IgG antibody show up in the test, meaning they had the infection. But, there are a lot of strains of Coronavirus. Right now, Infectious Disease specialists don't know if the antibody that shows up is from COVID-19 or a different strain of Coronavirus you've had before in your life.

Also, the Infectious Disease specialists don't know if the presence of this antibody means you're immune, aka, not able to get the illness again. It is still too soon to know this with COVID-19.

If a patient goes for this test and the test is positive, we are afraid it may give the patient a false sense of security that they have had COVID-19 and are immune, which may not be the case as stated above. For this reason, a detailed telemedicine visit should take place with a provider to discuss the benefits and risks of COVID-19 testing, as all patient's histories and concerns are different. If it is decided that a test is indicated, the provider will review how this testing is done during the visit. At this time, current recommendations suggest that a blood test and a nasopharyngeal swab be performed at the same time.

As we know more and have a test with a clear interpretation, we will update our patients.

If you have further questions, please see both the Infectious Disease Society of America and the CDC's statements on antibody testing.

[IDSA Releases Antibody Testing Primer](#)

[CDC Test for Past Infection](#)