



# STEAMBOAT EMERGENCY CENTER

## Types of Tests

There are two different types of tests – **diagnostic tests** and **antibody tests**. You and your physician will discuss which test(s) are right for you.

- A **diagnostic test** can show if you have an active coronavirus infection and should take steps to quarantine or isolate yourself from others. Currently there are two types of diagnostic tests which detect the virus – **molecular** tests, such as RT-PCR tests, that detect the virus’s genetic material, and **antigen** tests that detect specific proteins on the surface of the virus. **[Offered at Steamboat Emergency Center]**
- An **antibody test** looks for antibodies that are made by your immune system in response to a threat, such as a specific virus. Antibodies can help fight infections. Antibodies can take several days or weeks to develop after you have an infection and may stay in your blood for several weeks or more after recovery. Because of this, antibody tests should not be used to diagnose an active coronavirus infection. At this time researchers do not know if the presence of antibodies means that you are immune to the coronavirus in the future. **[Offered at Steamboat Emergency Center]**

There are some new diagnostic tests available with alternative methods and benefits.

- **Rapid, point-of-care** diagnostic tests use a mucus sample from the nose or throat but can be analyzed at the doctor’s office or clinic where the sample is collected and results may be available in minutes. These may be molecular or antigen tests. **[Rapid antigen test offered at Steamboat Emergency Center]**
- **At-home collection** tests, available only by prescription from a doctor, allow the patient to collect the sample at home and send it directly to the lab for analysis.
- **Saliva tests** allow a patient to spit into a tube rather than get their nose or throat swabbed. Saliva tests may be more comfortable for some people and may be safer for health care workers who can be farther away during the sample collection. **[Offered at Steamboat Emergency Center]**



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	MOLECULAR TEST	ANTIGEN TEST	ANTIBODY TEST
<b>Also known as . . .</b>	Diagnostic test, viral test, molecular test, nucleic acid amplification test (NAAT), RT-PCR test, LAMP test	Rapid diagnostic test (Some molecular tests are also rapid tests)	Serological test, serology, blood test, serology test
<b>How the sample is taken?</b>	Nasal or throat swab (most tests) Saliva (a few tests)	Nasal or throat swab	Finger stick or blood draw
<b>How long it takes to get results...</b>	Same day (some locations) or up to a week	One hour or less	Same day (many locations) or 1-3 days
<b>What it shows...</b>	Diagnoses active coronavirus infection	Diagnoses active coronavirus infection	Shows if you've been infected by coronavirus in the past
<b>What it can't do...</b>	Show if you ever had COVID-19 or were infected with the coronavirus in the past	Definitively rule out active coronavirus infection. Antigen tests are more likely to miss an active coronavirus infection compared to molecular tests. Your health care provider may order a molecular test if your antigen test shows a negative result but you have symptoms of COVID-19	Diagnose active coronavirus infection at the time of the test or show that you do not have COVID-19