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Memo: COVID-19 home test FAQ for Humboldt County

Dear Humboldt County,

As we enter the fall season with COVID-19 still very much a part of our lives, many questions about home testing are coming up as these tests are much more widely available now than in the past. This FAQ will be assessed periodically and updated when [community transmission](#) and hospitalizations are at a sustained lower level or new guidance is issued by CDC or CDPH.

- **What is covered in this FAQ under “COVID-19 home tests”?**

A home test for COVID-19 is one that is not supervised and not performed under a medical license. Home tests are usually bought from a pharmacy or online, and there are several brands currently approved by FDA for emergency use. Do not use a home test that is not approved by FDA for emergency use. A home test is not one that is proctored in person or via video. Home test results are accurate and should be acted upon, especially if positive. Anyone with a positive home test should isolate immediately and notify their close contacts who were exposed.

- **What are CDC recommendations on home testing?**

CDC recommends anyone with a positive home test to inform your medical provider. Some home tests will report results to the state and local health department if done via online video proctoring. These use an app or a website to observe the home test and then report electronically to the [state reporting system \(CalREDIE\)](#). Otherwise, home tests do not get reported to state or local health departments.

- **I have a COVID-19 positive home test, what do I do?**

All COVID-19 positive persons must [isolate](#), and all [close contacts](#) must [quarantine](#), based on [Humboldt County Health Orders](#), even if not contacted by public health officials. If a home test was used that does not report to the state reporting system and documentation of the test result is needed, the positive person will need to retest with a method that does report to the state by going to a [local testing site](#), preferably within 24 hours of the original positive home test. If no documentation is needed for your positive home test, isolate for 10 days as instructed by [Humboldt County Health Orders](#) and notify your [close contacts](#) that they are to [quarantine](#). Follow protocols set by your organization or business for identification and notification of [close contacts](#) as laid out by [Cal OSHA guidance](#). You do not need to call public health to report positive home test results. All confirmed COVID-19 positive lab reports will come to the local health department through the [state reporting system \(CalREDIE\)](#).

- **I’m a medical professional and my patient tested positive on a home test. What should I do?**

CDC recommends anyone with a positive home test to inform their medical provider. Anyone with a positive home test should isolate immediately and notify their close contacts who were exposed. If no documentation is needed for your patients positive home test, instruct them to isolate for 10 days as instructed by [Humboldt County Health Orders](#) and notify their [close contacts](#) that they are to [quarantine](#). If documentation of the test result is needed, the positive person will need to retest with a method that does report to the state by going to a [local testing site](#), preferably within 24 hours of the original positive home test. Provide medical care as you would to anyone with COVID-19.

- **Why would I need documentation of a positive COVID-19 test?**

Some settings may require documentation of a positive or negative COVID-19 test. Some examples would be for work, school, or pre-entry for a business, event, or gathering. You may also need documentation of a previous positive COVID-19 test to show proof that you do not need to re-test for COVID-19 for 90 days.



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phone: (707) 441-5400
fax: (707) 441-5412

Behavioral Health
phone: (707) 268-2990
fax: (707) 476-4049

Social Services
phone: (707) 476-4700
fax: (707) 441-2096

- **Can using home tests help avoid the need to quarantine after exposure at a gathering or event?**

Identifying COVID-19 positive individuals and isolating them in their home is key to stopping the spread and avoiding exposure. By excluding COVID-19 positive individuals from an event or gathering, workplace, or school, you will reduce the need for others to quarantine should they be exposed. If a home test was used that does not report to the state reporting system and documentation of the test result is needed, the positive person will need to retest with a method that does report to the state by going to a [local testing site](#), preferably within 24 hours of the home test. Only those who are unvaccinated and within 6 feet of another person for 15 minutes or more would meet the definition of [close contact](#) and need to quarantine. Wearing a mask reduces the risk but does not eliminate [close contact](#). In addition to testing, by structuring gatherings and events with adequate distancing [close contact](#) can be avoided for the most part. Using masks and physical distancing will keep participants from exposing each other, and help keep businesses, schools, and events running without need to shut down due to outbreak or large number of quarantined individuals. Reduced capacity, physically marking off areas for distancing, creating specific areas for food and drink where masks can be removed while distancing, modifying layouts for entering and exiting events to prevent congregating are all ways to improve COVID-19 safety at an event and reduce the likelihood for close contact. CDC offers [guidance to help prevent the spread of COVID-19](#) should events and gatherings go forward, as well as tools that event planners can use to [assess their level of readiness and planning](#) to safely hold an event.

- **If we have a positive home test in employee/student do we need to shut down a classroom/workplace?**

Only those who were unvaccinated and in [close contact](#) with the positive would need to quarantine, regardless if the positive test were a home test or lab reported confirmed test. If physical distancing, masking, and other risk reduction steps were maintained, the risk of spread is much lower. If public health determines there is an [outbreak](#), they may require a classroom, a school, an event, or a business to close to prevent further spread in that setting, depending on the severity of the situation. Not all [outbreaks](#) result in school or business closures. Some events or businesses may close voluntarily, postpone, or cancel events, even when not required by public health based on concern in the local setting. Follow protocols set by your organization or business for identification and notification of [close contacts](#) as laid out by [Cal OSHA guidance](#). You do not need to call public health to report positive case.

- **Can someone who is COVID-19 positive on a home test attend a gathering, event, work, school?**

No, anyone with a positive COVID-19 test must isolate for 10 days from the date of collection of the positive test or the date of onset of symptoms, regardless of vaccination status or type of test used. A negative test later during the 10 days isolation period does not change isolation requirements and repeat testing should only be recommended by a medical professional.

- **I've tested positive for COVID-19 on a home test, should I test again to end my isolation?**

No. Anyone with a positive test should not test again for 90 days unless they have new symptoms or are instructed to do so by a medical professional. If you are required to test weekly for work/school/team/organization, you will not have to test for those 90 days but should resume weekly testing again after 90 days has passed from the date of your positive test. If a home test was used that does not report to the state reporting system and documentation of the test result is needed, the positive person will need to retest with a method that does report to the state by going to a [local testing site](#), preferably within 24 hours of the home test.

- **A medical professional has instructed me to test again. Should I test again?**

Yes. If a medical professional has evaluated the situation and made a recommendation for repeat testing, you should follow the advice of that medical professional. There are very limited circumstances where repeat testing is recommended. Medical professionals who are unsure if someone should retest should consult with public health officials for guidance.

- **I have COVID-19 symptoms, should I attend a gathering, event, work, school?**

Anyone with cold and flu symptoms should stay home until the symptoms resolve. A test is recommended if the symptoms are consistent with COVID-19 or a medical professional recommends testing. Please see [CDC recommendations on when to return to school](#).



- **Should we use home COVID-19 testing at gatherings, events, schools, workplaces?**

Home tests can quickly and easily identify someone with COVID-19 and are most useful for smaller gatherings or if someone is not feeling well at home or knows they were exposed. Home tests do not report to the state reporting system, and therefore state and local public health officials will not be notified of these positive results. Results and accuracy of a home test are hard for an event organizer or employer to verify and are not recommended for larger events or workplaces if verification of results is necessary. The state has made it easy for events, businesses, and organizations to become testing sites for their employees or community: <https://testing.covid19.ca.gov/get-started/>. Training, supplies, and reporting platforms are all available through this program. Local public health can only provide testing supplies to local healthcare providers, we do not supply local events or businesses with rapid or PCR testing that is available through the [state program](#) or private vendors.

- **Can home tests be used for Pre-entry Testing?**

Pre-entry testing is testing performed prior to someone entering an event, competition, congregate setting like a school, healthcare, or other venue or business which can reduce the risk of spreading infection for people who are entering these settings. Proof of a negative test in the past 72 hours or offering rapid testing on site are ways to accomplish pre-entry testing. Home tests do not report to the state reporting system, and therefore state and local public health officials will not be notified of these positive results. Results and accuracy of a home test are hard for an event organizer or employer to verify and are not recommended for larger events or workplaces if verification of results is necessary. Home tests may be most appropriate for small gatherings or family get-togethers. Symptomatic individuals should not be allowed to enter and would be screened out using pre-entry screening. Symptomatic individuals who completed a 10-day isolation period or have a verified negative COVID-19 test with resolving symptoms would not be excluded. Re-testing is not recommended for anyone with a documented positive COVID-19 test in the past 90 days who is not having COVID-19 symptoms.

- **Who should receive Pre-entry Testing?**

Unvaccinated Individuals

Individuals should have pre-entry testing performed if they have not been fully vaccinated [\[1\]](#) and will be taking part in activities that put them or others at higher risk for COVID-19 exposure. Pre-entry testing should be considered for those attending large indoor social or mass gatherings (such as large private events, live performance events, sporting events, theme parks, etc.), competing in high contact sports, or other events in crowded or poorly-ventilated settings.

Vaccinated Individuals

Fully vaccinated individuals do not need to undergo pre-entry COVID-19 testing per CDC recommendations at this time. Events, venues, schools, or businesses could require vaccinated individuals to also undergo testing if they choose, but it is not recommended by public health officials.

- **What is recommended for a high contact sport, and could home tests be used in sports?**

Home tests can quickly and easily identify someone with COVID-19 and are most useful for smaller gatherings or if someone is not feeling well at home or knows they were exposed. Home tests do not report to the state reporting system, and therefore state and local public health officials will not be notified of these positive results. CDPH ranked sports based on their level of contact in the [CDPH recreational sports guidance](#) applied last winter and spring. Given current COVID-19 case rates in Humboldt County that are higher than they were during those times, we strongly recommend following testing guidelines from that guidance listed under Purple Tier. Any sport listed as low contact sport or Purple Tier sport is not recommended to test at this time. All other sports are strongly recommended to test under the guidance listed as “Play in Less Restrictive Tiers: Outdoor High-Contact Sports.” Any sport or event can decide to test to add a layer of safety for their event or organization. CDPH guidance did not recommend testing those under the age of 13 for youth sports. The state has made it easy for schools, businesses, and organizations to become testing sites for the community: <https://testing.covid19.ca.gov/get-started/>. Training, supplies, and reporting platforms are all available through this program. Local public health can only provide testing supplies to local healthcare providers, we do not supply local events or businesses with rapid or PCR testing that is available through the state program or private vendors.



- **If I'm fully vaccinated and have a positive COVID-19 home test, do I need to isolate?**

Everyone who has a positive COVID-19 test must isolate for 10 days from the onset of symptoms or if no symptoms 10 days from date of collection of the positive test, regardless of vaccination status or type of test. A negative test later during the 10 days isolation period does not change isolation requirements and repeat testing is not recommended.

- **I had a positive COVID-19 result on a home test, should I test again for work/school/team/organization/event?**

Anyone with a positive test should not test again for 90 days unless they have new symptoms or are instructed to do so by a medical professional. If you are required to test weekly for work/school/team/organization, you will not have to test for those 90 days but should resume weekly testing again after 90 days has passed from the date of your positive test. Fully vaccinated individuals should not participate in weekly screening test programs. Home test results are not reported to the state or local public health and therefore are not sufficient proof of a positive test to exempt testing for 90 days in settings where documentation is needed.

- **Can individuals who are traveling to our gathering or event have pre-entry (pre-travel) testing using home tests?**

Individuals who are not fully vaccinated and must travel should follow pre-entry (pre-travel) testing recommendations in [CDC travel guidance](#) before and after travel. Home tests can quickly and easily identify someone with COVID-19 and are most useful for smaller gatherings or if someone is not feeling well at home or knows they were exposed. Home tests do not report to the state reporting system, and therefore state and local public health officials will not be notified of these positive results. **Home tests are appropriate for use when documentation of results**

- **Can home tests be used for non-essential travel of unvaccinated persons?**

Except in connection with essential travel, Californians should avoid non-essential travel unless they are fully vaccinated. Non-essential travelers who are not fully vaccinated should get tested with a viral test 1-3 days before travel, and get tested 3-5 days upon arrival to their destination ([CDC travel guidance](#)). Home test results are not reported to the state or local public health and therefore are not sufficient proof of a positive test or to exempt testing for 90 days, but could be used in situations where verification is not needed. Unvaccinated travelers should stay home and self-quarantine for a full 7 days after travel, even if their test is negative. This includes those who are under the age of 12 who are not yet eligible for vaccination. Non-essential travelers who are not fully vaccinated and don't get tested should stay home and [self-quarantine](#) for 10 days after travel, including those under the age of 12 who are not yet eligible for vaccination.

"Non-essential travel" includes travel that is considered [tourism or recreational in nature](#).

"Essential travel" is travel associated with the operation, maintenance, or usage of critical infrastructure or otherwise required or expressly authorized by law (including other applicable state and local public health directives), including work and study, critical infrastructure support, economic services and supply chains, health, immediate medical care, and safety and security. Persons who routinely cross state or country borders for essential travel do not need to quarantine.



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Resources:

Face Coverings:

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/Face-Coverings-QA.aspx#>
<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/guidance-for-face-coverings.aspx>
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/outdoor-activities.html>

Gatherings:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/large-events/considerations-for-events-gatherings.html>
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/gatherings.html>
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/outdoor-activities.html>
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/community/COVID19-events-gatherings-readiness-and-planning-tool.pdf>

Travel:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/travel-during-covid19.html> (current)
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/international-travel-during-covid19.html>
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/travel-risk.html>
<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/Travel-Advisory.aspx> (historical)

Testing:

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/Updated-COVID-19-Testing-Guidance.aspx>
<https://testing.covid19.ca.gov/get-started/>

Data:

<https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view>
<https://humboldt.gov/2749/Dashboard>

Isolation and Quarantine:

<https://humboldt.gov/2831/Isolation-and-Quarantine-Orders>

Fully Vaccinated Guidance:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated.html>
<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/COVID-19-Public-Health-Recommendations-for-Fully-Vaccinated-People.aspx>

