



As COVID-19 antibody testing in the United States is starting to ramp up, we wanted to address some common myths and misconceptions with all of the information coming out. Here is a Q&A on some common antibody testing questions and how it can help with risk assessment and management.

What is a COVID-19 antibody test? Will it tell me if I have COVID-19?

The antibody tests are not diagnostic, meaning they don't tell you if you are currently positive for COVID-19. There are several kinds including pinprick, blood draw, immediate read, etc. For each of these tests, the antibody won't provide you with information that you currently are infected. That is what the diagnostic test (swab/saliva) is for. The antibody tests can be used, in the right circumstances, to indicate that you have been exposed to Coronavirus-SARS-CoV-2 in the past, the virus that causes COVID-19.

I want to go back to work, shop, and see people in my community with confidence. Should I get it?

In the near future, we all should. The tests will be good enough to provide us with that information. However, for now, the tests work best on people who were hospitalized and people who were very sick from COVID-19.

How accurate are the antibody tests?

Many of the tests that came out initially came out in a hurry and have a general lack of validation to know whether the tests were working. Another issue is that some tests, especially the rapid ones, may be falsely detecting antibodies to other coronaviruses (not COVID-19), including ones that cause the common cold. They could yield a high false positive rate, which could be dangerous if people believe they are immune, providing a false sense of security.

Why is this a problem?

Human nature tells us that this measure of security, real or not, will lead to more people decreasing their social distancing and hygienic practices. The relaxing of social distancing behavior is still an issue for those of us who have antibodies because doctors aren't sure about how protective the antibodies are yet, meaning how much immunity a person will have from COVID-19. This is a far greater issue for the large number of false positives in these early tests because these people may relax their behavior, inadvertently contract the virus, and further spread the Coronavirus before they realize the test was faulty.

Even if it's a good antibody test, what are some of the reasons that I should question the result?

It may be too early in recovery when you test and the test might indicate that you have not had COVID-19 when in reality, you had. However, the opposite can also be true. Other common Coronaviruses (not COVID-19), such as some of the



common cold viruses, may cross-react and make it appear that you have had COVID-19 when, in fact, you did not.

This is all so confusing? How can I know what to do?

Work with your healthcare providers, they can help you determine if these tests are right for you, right now. The technology is evolving rapidly, and we are watching this very closely. We will continue to evaluate and incorporate this rapidly changing science for your safety and security.

Do antibody tests mean we can start getting back to “normal”?

Unfortunately, just because there is a presence of antibodies in someone, does not mean we can begin to safely reassume our previous “normal” activities. There are a few factors to consider with antibodies and resuming our previous activities:

1. Antibodies do not guarantee immunity
2. People with antibodies might be able to spread the virus unknowingly since they are asymptomatic
3. People may have a wide range of response to the virus – meaning some who tested positive and recover may show little to no antibodies in their system.

However, it is important to mention that there is not enough research to back up all of these claims, but it is worth thinking about these concerns in terms of risk management and risk assessment as we all think about resuming our normal activities. Until there is more information and antibody testing are further developed, it is critical to continue to follow social distancing and stay at home measures.