COVID-19 Testing: Which Type of Test is Best for Me?

There are different types of tests available to detect COVID-19: polymerase chain reaction (PCR), antigen, and antibody. This guidance is designed to explain when one test might be used over another. For more information contact the Stratford Health Department: 203-385-4090, email health@townofstratford.com, web www.townofstratford.com/coronavirus.

	PCR Test	Antigen Test	Antibody Test
When should I use this test?	The PCR test is a highly sensitive test and should be used with both symptomatic AND asymptomatic individuals.	Antigen tests are best suited for: • Presenting with recent (within 7 days) onset of COVID-19 symptoms • Undergoing serial screening (i.e. nursing homes) Antigen tests are NOT recommended for asymptomatic individuals.	Antibody tests are recommended if looking to determine whether or not you had a past infection.
What do my results mean?	A positive PCR test result means a person has an active COVID-19 infection or recent infection (test results can remain positive even after a person has "recovered"). Individuals with a positive test result should consult with their healthcare provider and local health department for further guidance. A negative PCR test result means COVID-19 was not detected at the time the sample was collected. This does not mean a person won't develop symptoms in the future.	A positive antigen test *when used appropriately* means a person has an active COVID-19 infection. A negative test result means COVID-19 infection was not detected. Both false negative and positive test results are possible when not used correctly, particularly in individuals without symptoms. A follow-up with a PCR test is recommended in most cases.	A positive antibody test means the individual being tested may have been infected with COVID-19 in the past. A negative antibody test means an individual may not have had COVID-19 in the past.