

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends COVID-19 testing for people who have symptoms of COVID-19 or have had close contact with someone with confirmed COVID-19.

There are two kinds of tests available for COVID-19: viral tests and antibody tests:

- Viral testing detects current COVID-19 infections and is typically done using a nasal swab, oral swab, or saliva sample.
- Antibody testing may detect past COVID-19 infection and is a blood test. At this time, most people do not need antibody tests. Currently, there is no proof that antibodies in the blood ensures immunity from further COVID-19 infections.

If you or your loved one has symptoms of COVID-19, contact your health care provider first about being tested.

What to do if your health care provider recommends COVID-19 testing

Your health care provider may be able to test your loved one at their health care facility. However, if they lack testing supplies, you may need to seek another source. Your local or state health department can provide the latest information and locations for testing in your area. In Massachusetts, you can find testing sites at mass.gov/covid-19-testing. In New Hampshire, you can find testing sites at nh.gov/covid19.

Drive-through testing may be your best option, as your loved one can stay in the car while being tested.

Before going to any testing location, be sure to:

- Talk to your loved one's health care provider about your concerns about testing and advocate for the kind of test that you feel your loved one will tolerate best.
- Determine whether you need an appointment or doctor's order. Explore options for minimizing wait times.
- Learn what you can about the testing procedure so that you can troubleshoot and plan ahead. For example, if you are going to be waiting in a line, you may want to bring a chair for your loved one.

Tips for Family Caregivers

You may be concerned that your loved one will be anxious or agitated before or during a COVID-19 test, or perhaps may even refuse to be tested. You will want to have a plan for how to inform staff at the testing location that your loved one has dementia and what your concerns are without upsetting your loved one. Depending on the testing location, you may be able to share this information in a phone call prior to the test, but you may need to write down your concerns in advance to share with testing personnel.

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Here are some other tips on how to address your concerns:

- Carefully consider how much notice and information to provide to your loved one about the COVID-19 test.
 - ▶ Telling your loved one too far in advance may cause worry.
 - ▶ Simple language with familiar words about the testing is probably best. For example, you might want to say that it is a test for a new bug or flu.
 - ▶ The protective equipment worn by the health care providers may be frightening. Be prepared to provide calm and consistent responses to questions.
- Make sure you have all necessary items including masks, ID, and insurance card.
- Provide a calming item or activity during the wait and procedure.
 - ▶ Play music or a video if you are using drive-through testing.
 - ▶ Bring a comfort item if your loved one has one, such as a photo album or blanket.
 - ▶ Consider providing a distraction, such as singing a song or looking at a picture while the specimen is being collected.
 - ▶ If you are using drive-through testing, sit next to your loved one during the testing procedure, moving to the backseat if necessary and permitted.
- Explain what is happening in the testing procedure step-by-step.
- Remember that communication through masks and other personal protective equipment can be especially difficult for people with dementia.
 - ▶ Be aware of your body language.
 - ▶ Give ample time for your loved one to respond to questions and express him/herself.
 - ▶ Introduce health care providers even if your loved one is usually familiar with them, as it can be difficult to recognize someone with a mask.
 - ▶ Be patient and remain calm if your loved one has difficulty keeping the mask on or following social distancing requirements.

For Additional Assistance

The Alzheimer's Association has a 24/7 Helpline that is available anytime, day or night, to provide expert advice on your family's unique situation regarding COVID-19 or any other issue related to Alzheimer's and all other dementia at 800.272.3900. You can also visit us online at alz.org/MANH.

The Centers for Disease Control (cdc.gov) has a wealth of information on all COVID-19 issues, including testing.