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## WHERE TO GET CORONAVIRUS TESTING IN VERMONT

During this time of pandemic, getting the medical care that you need can be problematic and time consuming. If you have symptoms of an upper or lower respiratory infection, you do not know whether it is caused by a cold, flu, or coronavirus. Therefore, if you have ANY infectious symptoms such as runny nose, sore throat, loss of smell, cough, fever, severe muscle aches, etc. then you need to be tested for coronavirus. *I strongly believe that we must test every person with any upper or lower respiratory symptoms and have a low bar for testing.* If you are symptomatic and have a positive PCR test—then you must be managed by a physician—but you can get the process started by getting you coronavirus test on your own initiative.

There are two kinds of coronavirus laboratory tests. Both utilize either a nasal swab or a nasopharyngeal swab to gather samples of the virus.

1. **Antigen Test:** This is a rapid, point of care test that offers results in less than 30 minutes. The most common is the *Abbott BinaxNOW™* COVID-19 Test. These tests are not very accurate and have many false negatives and false positives. I DO NOT recommend this type of testing.

2. **PCR Test:** This is not a rapid test. The sample must be sent to a laboratory and the results currently take from 2-4 days on the average in Vermont. This test is highly accurate, especially in symptomatic patients. I DO recommend this test for coronavirus.

If you are symptomatic, and your PCR test is negative (normal), then you probably have a cold or flu. The exception would be if you are tested early during the asymptomatic or the pre-symptomatic stages, then the PCR test can be a false negative.

If your PCR test is positive (abnormal) then you have Covid-19, are required to be under quarantine, and must be managed by your physician.

**It is not easy to get a coronavirus test on demand in Vermont.** Here are some of the choices.

1. **Vermont Department of Health (VDH)**
   The VDH in my opinion is not well organized regarding Covid-19 testing. If you call the VDH hotline asking how to be tested, the information that they give you will likely be out of date or not pragmatic.

   *The VDH is expanding the number of popup sites throughout the state due to the worsening of Covid-19.*
   To access the opportunity to schedule an appointment for a *PCR Test* you must create an account in order to schedule at a popup sites throughout Vermont. Go to: https://vermont.force.com/events/s/selfregistration

   Once you have created an account you can then pick a testing site. Most of the testing sites require a scheduled appointment and that can take 1-2 weeks to set up in advance.

Each popup site throughout the state **theoretically** has the ability to perform a limited number of walk-in tests (without an appointment). However, to get this walk-in test you must show up at the popup when it opens. *The problem: the VDH will not release the opening and closing hours for each popup.* You might assume that they open at 9 AM and close at 5 PM, but I cannot offer certainty on this schedule. To identify the current popups go to: https://www.healthvermont.gov/covid-19/testing/where-get-tested

Insurance does cover the cost of this testing or if you do not have insurance then the testing is paid for by the State of Vermont.

This website can be very difficult to navigate.

*No provider appointment necessary.*

2. **Garnet Transport Medicine** at the Burlington Airport
   This private coronavirus test site has many interesting options. *This may be your best choice for testing.*
   Their website is = https://www.garnet.care/testing/
   Insurance will not cover the cost of the *Antigen Test* but may cover the cost of the *PCR Test*.
   The *Antigen Test* = $125 and the *PCR Test* = $175
   Go to their website to make an appointment or in some cases to schedule someone to come to your home to collect the sample. Results commonly come back in 2-4 days.

   This website is easy to navigate.

   *No provider appointment necessary.*

3. **ClearChoiceMD Urgent Care Center** 1200 Williston Road, South Burlington
   They do not offer appointments for Covid-19 testing but you can "save a spot in line" through their online registration portal. https://www.clockwisemd.com/hospitals/5077/visits/new
   The *Antigen Test* is not covered by insurance, but the *PCR Test* probably is covered.

   This website can be very difficult to navigate.

   *A provider appointment is required, either in person or via a telemedicine office visit.*

4. **Kinney Drugs**
   Selected Kinney Drugstores in Vermont offer drive up coronavirus testing. You must schedule an appointment to get this test and getting an appointment can take 1-2 weeks to schedule in advance. Results commonly come back in 2-4 days. Testing is covered by insurance.
   Go to: https://secure.kinneydrugs.com/pharmacy/covid-19/

   This website is easy to navigate.

   *No provider appointment necessary.*

5. **Walgreens**
   Selected Walgreens Drugstores in Vermont offer drive up coronavirus testing. You must schedule an appointment to get this test and getting an appointment can take 1-2 weeks to schedule in advance. Testing is covered by insurance. Results commonly come back in 2-4 days.
   Go to: https://www.walgreens.com/findcare/covid19/testing?ban=covid_testing

   This website is easy to navigate.

   *No provider appointment necessary.*

6.  **The University of Vermont Medical Center (UVMMC) and the UVM Health Network**
    *Due to the recent ransomware computer virus at UVMMC and the UVVMHN—until further notice—they are not a fully reliable source for Covid-19 testing.*

    The drive through testing site at the Fanny Allen Campus of UVMMC is "open" for Covid-19 PCR testing.

    Testing at UVVMC is an option, but, they have a limited number of test kits each day, so even if you have a written lab order, you may be turned away, and need to come back the next day.

    <u>This website and their phone system are impossible to navigate.</u>

    *A provider appointment is required, either in person or via a telemedicine office visit.*

    **You must have a paper order from your health care practitioner to get a test from the UVMMC, any lab tests cannot be ordered via computer at this time.**

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