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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 pre-symptomatic stages, then the PCR test can be a false negative, and if your symptoms look like Covid-19 you should be retested.

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.

You can get tested on-demand with same day PCR with some exceptions. I have personally received PCR testing from the Vermont Department of Health (VDH), Kinney Drugstore, and Garnet Transport Medicine.

If you are symptomatic, you will need to notify the personnel at each site, so they can take extra precautions.

#1 BEST CHOICE: If you NEED an immediate PCR test (today or tomorrow) then your best choice is a VDH popup walk-in see further details below ★.

#2 LESSER CHOICE: UVMC Lab (but you will need an appointment with your provider and a paper lab order), or Garnet Transport Medicine (you will need to self-pay \$175 and it is not covered by insurance).

#3 If you need a PCR test and can wait for 1-2 weeks to **SCHEDULE IN ADVANCE** (after setting up an online account) then your choices are: **Vermont Department of Health (VDH), Kinney Drugstore, or Walgreens Drugstore.** Sometimes you can get a same day appointment at Kinney or Walgreens. All take insurance but *only the VDH has free testing for those without insurance.*

Here is more detail regarding your 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.

Scheduling an appointment for a Covid-19 PCR test within 1-2 weeks:

To access the opportunity to schedule an appointment for a *PCR Test* you must create an account in order to **pre-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.

★Walk-ins are available through the VDH for SAME DAY TESTING.

The VDH has opened easy to access popup sites throughout the state.

Go to: <https://www.healthvermont.gov/covid-19/testing> and click the link “where to get tested.” The popup sites will allow you to walk-in and complete the paperwork manually. Most of the popup sites have plenty of test kits for walk-ins.

Chittenden and Addison County Popup Sites:

1. Burlington City Arts—Pine Street: Hours 10 PM to 6 PM
2. Waterbury—1727 Guptil Road: Hours 9 AM to 3 PM
3. Winooski—O’Brien Community Center, 32 Mallets Bay Ave: Hours 9 AM to 3 PM or 2 PM to 8 PM
4. Middlebury, 154 Creek Road Hours 10 PM to 6 PM

Each popup site throughout the state has the ability to perform a large number of walk-in tests (without an appointment). ***Some of the sites have an unlimited number of walk-in tests available.*** The CIC sites at **Burlington Pine Street, Winooski Mallets Bay, and Middlebury Creek Road** generally have enough test kits for walk-in PCR testing with **NO APPOINTMENT.** Even if the VDH website says that the site is “FULL” there are still **walk-in kits available, most of the time.**

For in person information, you can call the VDH phone line at 802-863-7240, they are open from 8:15 AM to 4:15 PM. The staff on the phone lines tend not to be helpful, are not well informed, and do not field simple questions well.

Insurance can cover the cost of this testing (but there can be exceptions) or you can elect to bypass the insurance system or if you do not have insurance, then the testing is paid for by the State of Vermont and is free.

This website and phone system can be very difficult to navigate.

No provider appointment necessary.

You can get tested at the popups if you are symptomatic.

- 2. Garnet Transport Medicine** at the Burlington Airport on White Road—they are not in the terminal.
*This private test site has the easiest way to get same day testing. Go to their website to make an appointment. Their website is = <https://www.garnet.care/testing/>
Insurance will not cover the cost of the *Antigen Test* or the cost of the *PCR Test*.
ALL TESTING IS SELF-PAY. The *Antigen Test* = \$125 and the *PCR Test* = \$175*

There is one big problem with Garnet. They DO NOT have a password protected registration system. DO NOT provide your credit card online for it to remain on file.

This website is easy to navigate.

No provider appointment necessary.

You can get tested at Garnet if you are symptomatic.

3. 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.

You can get tested at Kinney Drugs if you are symptomatic.

4. 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.

You can get tested at Walgreens if you are symptomatic.

5. The University of Vermont Medical Center (UVMHC) and the UVM Health Network

Due to the recent ransomware computer virus at UVMHC and the UVVMHN—until further notice—they are not a fully reliable source for Covid-19 testing.

This website and their phone system are impossible to navigate.

A provider appointment is required, either in person or via a telemedicine office visit. Once you have a paper order you will need an appointment for the testing.

You can get tested at UVMC if you are symptomatic.

6. 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 and phone system can be very difficult to navigate.

A provider office appointment is required at their clinic.

You can get tested at ClearChoiceMD if you are symptomatic.

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