FAQs: SMCHD COVID-19 Testing

These FAQs pertain to testing performed by the St. Mary's County Health Department (SMCHD). Questions relating to other testing sites should be directed to the specific facility.

How long is the wait time?

- The wait time for testing varies depending on volume. Please be patient so that we are able to provide quality care for every patient as they are seen.

Are there any restrictions for the drive-thru?

- Vehicles taller than 6'10" should park and walk up for services. Please wear a face covering or mask and maintain social distancing in line.

What do I need with me to get tested?

- Please have your identification out and ready. Please wear a face covering or mask when interacting with staff until instructed to lower it for testing.

What is the charge?

- Testing is provided **free of charge** to all patients. There will be no out-of-pocket cost, co-payment, co-insurance, etc.

What should I expect? Will it hurt?

- The staff person performing the test will ask you to pull down your face covering or mask and slightly tip your head back so that they can collect the sample. Generally, the test involves a swab ("q-tip") inserted into either the patient's nostrils to the back of the throat (nasopharyngeal method) or the middle portion of the nose (nasal method). Both methods are accurate and effective; we use the method that matches the test kit we have from the lab. Most patients report minor, temporary discomfort at most. Some patients may experience coughing or tearing up during or after the test.

What type of test is this?

- SMCHD performs PCR testing for COVID-19. At this time, SMCHD does not offer rapid antigen testing. Rapid PCR testing is available on a limited basis (*by appointment only, as supply allows, individuals must meet certain screening criteria - call (301) 475-4330*) . PCR tests, also known as molecular tests, use samples from a nasopharyngeal, nasal or oral swab, or saliva, to test for the presence of the virus's genetic material. The type of swab used by SMCHD varies based on available stock, insurance type, and other factors.

I've been tested, now what do I do?

- If you have been identified as a close contact of someone who has COVID-19, then the SMCHD team will provide you with individualized guidance on quarantine. Please be honest with the team about any symptoms or potential exposures so that they can give you the best recommendation for your situation. If it has been recommended that you quarantine, please continue quarantining while you wait for your test results and further guidance.

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How will I get my test results?

- All individuals who **test positive** will receive a phone call with their results when they are available.
- PCR Results (positive or negative) for patients tested **prior to February 3, 2021** at the SMCHD testing sites are available online via the SMCHD patient portal.
- PCR Results (positive or negative) for patients tested **on or after February 3, 2021** at the SMCHD testing sites are available online via the Mako Medical patient portal. Click the link below for your testing site for information:
  - SMCHD Main Office in Leonardtown
  - Harm Reduction Program Office in Lexington Park
  - Spring Ridge Middle School Health Center
  - Margaret Brent Middle School Health Center
- Rapid/POC PCR Results (positive or negative) are available online via the SMCHD patient portal.

How can I get a written copy?

- Patients can save/download and print their results from the online portal they are using. If you are experiencing technical issues please contact SMCHD.

What if my results are positive?

- SMCHD will attempt to contact you within 24 hours of receiving the test result to provide care recommendations and to start the public health investigation (contact tracing) process. In the meantime, you should continue to stay home and self-isolate away from others and monitor your health. Most people who get sick will have mild/moderate cold or flu-like symptoms and can recover at home.
- If you have symptoms of COVID-19 and they worsen or become severe, you should seek medical care. Call your doctor's office, urgent care or the hospital before going in for care. If you are experiencing a medical emergency, call 9-1-1.
- Please note that SMCHD will not offer retesting of persons who test positive for 90 days after their positive test. This reflects current CDC guidance and is based on the latest science about COVID-19 that shows people can continue to test positive for up to 3 months after diagnosis yet not be infectious to others. Release from isolation documentation will be provided.

What if I'm a close contact but my results are negative?

- If you are a close contact, your test is negative and you don't have symptoms, please continue to self-quarantine for the amount of time recommended for you by your contact tracer. This is important because symptoms can sometimes appear up to 14 days after you've been exposed to someone with COVID-19, even if you have had a negative test. Other quarantine time periods may be possible depending on your specific situation and the timing of your test.