

The Truth About COVID Testing

Why we recommend the Molecular Test over the “Rapid” Test:

	Molecular (aka PCR, viral RNA, Nucleic acid)	“Rapid” Antibody	Rapid Antigen (Singing River currently does not offer)
Accuracy (Sensitivity/Specificity)	95 to 100%	Some as low as 60%. Singing River platform is 97%	Varies widely; some as low as 50%
Method	Nasal Swab	Blood Draw (Serology)	Nasal Swab
What it looks at	Virus genetic material presence	Antibodies in your serum	Proteins on surface (not genetic material)
What it tells you	Detects Actual Virus*	Past Infection	Intended to identify Active Infection, has limitations
What it doesn't tell you	If you were infected in the past and recovered	Does NOT tell you if currently infected	May miss active infections according to FDA
Turnaround presently	24 hours to 36 hours	Same day	15 minutes per test, limited one day capacity
Turnaround for inpatient admission	15 minutes or 4 hour batch testing	Same day	Typically 15 minutes; Not offered at Singing River
Turnaround <i>once Rapid launched in September</i>	Same day for symptomatic testing	Same day	15 minutes or less, has volume capacity limitations
Cost	\$99 - see insurance coverage below	\$35	Singing River does not offer antigen testing
Insurance coverage	No cost if insured, covered by grant if not insured	Not covered by most insurance	Possibly covered by some insurance
Limitations	Virus may not be present first couple of days	Antibodies may not form until 3 weeks after infection	Detectability varies; may detect other Coronaviruses
Usefulness	Conclusive results	Plasma donation, contact tracing, curiosity satisfier	Useful only if at optimal cycle (peak) of the virus infection

*May identify remnants of dead virus post infection

Other important items to note:

- Accuracy is critical; sample collection methods are not as good at some places as they are at others.
- Some people who are around a person shedding the virus could get the virus after the test but before the results are back, making the original test irrelevant.

