



Sioux Lookout  
First Nations  
Health Authority

# CORONAVIRUS COVID-19

## INFORMATION SHEET

### COVID-19 Test Results Re-positive and Re-infection: What does this mean?

July 6, 2021

Have you had a COVID-19 test yet? Many people have. All across our region, we use a rapid antigen surveillance test for people with symptoms, for possible exposures, and for work and travel clearance. This is a quick reference test that lets us know if someone *could be* sick with COVID-19. The results are considered along with your answers to COVID-19 screening questions and a health assessment.

Sometimes the results of this rapid test may seem to conflict with your recent history or symptoms. People sometimes have to ask, “Am I sick with COVID-19 or not”?

#### What is a re-positive?

The COVID-19 virus can linger in your system for up to 4 months. In some cases, it can stay even longer, especially if you have a weak immune system. If you had a recent COVID-19 infection within the past several months, you could test positive. But is this a positive for a new COVID-19 infection or is it a re-positive? A re-positive result can be due to the COVID-19 virus still in your system from last time you were infected.

#### What about re-infection?

A weak immune system can make a person vulnerable to re-infection. As well, some of the new variants of concern are much easier to catch. So, it is possible to get sick with COVID-19 again even if you have been sick before, or even vaccinated. In some cases, symptoms might not be as severe. But in other cases, as with the elderly, symptoms can be a lot more severe.



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### So, is this a re-positive or a new re-infection?

To answer this question, a second COVID-19 test is required. A more accurate PCR test will be done in a lab. Also, some practical COVID-19 screening questions will be asked. If there are any symptoms or a recent history of contact with a case or travel, you might be asked to self-isolate while waiting for the test results. Contact tracing of very close contacts might also begin. If it is a true re-infection, then self-isolation and contact tracing will continue and you will be considered as a new case.

### What about a false positive or a false negative?

With the rapid-antigen surveillance test, it is also possible to have a false positive or a false negative. The result along with answers to the screening questions about COVID-19 symptoms, contact with cases, or travel could help inform a decision on what to do next. Another test could be done to confirm or clarify the test result.

### Questions?

Write to us at: [ACWinfo@slfhna.com](mailto:ACWinfo@slfhna.com) or follow us Facebook. Dr. Lloyd Douglas, our Public Health Physician, will answer your COVID-19 questions every Wednesday afternoon at 5:00pm. You can also find many COVID-19 resources on our website at: [www.slfhna.com/covid/](http://www.slfhna.com/covid/)

### To learn more:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/testing.html>

[https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/2019\\_testing\\_clearing\\_cases\\_guidance.pdf](https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/2019_testing_clearing_cases_guidance.pdf)