What Does a Negative Antigen Test Mean?

What is an Antigen Test?

- **Antigen tests** detect the presence of a specific viral protein in a collected sample. This protein is known as an antigen on the surface of the COVID-19 virus.

- **Antigen tests** perform best when the person is tested in the early stages of infection with COVID-19.

- **Antigen tests** are approved for use in symptomatic persons up to 7 days into their illness.

What is the difference between an Antigen Test and a PCR test?

- A **PCR** (polymerase chain reaction) is a molecular test for COVID-19 that is performed in a laboratory and detects a virus's genetic material.

- **Antigen tests** for COVID 19 are generally less able to detect the virus than a **PCR** test.

What does it mean if my Antigen Test is negative?

- A negative test result means that antigen for COVID-19 was not detected in the collected specimen.

- A negative Antigen Test does not definitively rule out infection with the virus.

- CDC recommends confirming negative Antigen Test results with a PCR test especially if you are symptomatic or had a known exposure to a person confirmed to have COVID-19.

What do I do if my Antigen Test is negative?

- If you have symptoms, isolate yourself from others until your symptoms have been gone for 24 hours.

- If you have had symptoms for more than 5 days obtain a PCR test for confirmation.

- If you develop symptoms or your symptoms get worse, you should contact your health care provider and consider getting a PCR test.

- If you are at high risk for complications from COVID-19 or will be in contact with someone who is, then consider getting a PCR test to confirm that you are negative.

Practice Healthy Habits

- Wear a cloth face covering in all public settings.

- Practice social distancing whenever possible.

- Cover your cough or sneeze into your elbow or a tissue.

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for ≥ 20 seconds or use alcohol-based hand rub.

- Clean and disinfect objects and surfaces regularly, including your phone.

- If you are feeling ill or develop a fever, stay home until your symptoms are improved or your fever is gone for at least 24 hours.

Learn More

- Tennessee Department of Health: www.tn.gov/health/cedep/ncov

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov