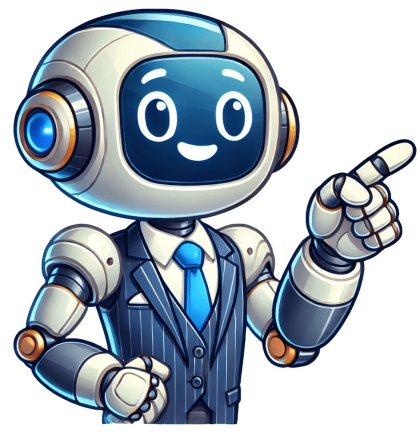


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Flu test how long does it take

TimingsTypesAccuracyWhere to get testedFAQSummaryMedical professionals can usually collect samples very quickly. However, people may have to wait for the results. While rapid tests take only around 15 minutes, slower tests may require an 8-hour wait. Influenza, or flu, can be dangerous for older people, young children, and individuals with compromised immune systems. Flu tests are important as they speed up the treatment process and help stop the flu from spreading.This article examines how long flu tests take, test types, accuracy, and more. Share on PinterestCandyRetriever/Getty ImagesAll flu tests involve taking a sample of bodily fluids to test in a lab. The sample collection should take less than a minute, but some procedures, such as those requiring a bronchoscope, can take up to several minutes.Different flu tests use different sample collection methods, including: Nasopharyngeal (NP) swab: This technique uses a swab that goes through the nose and into the nasopharynx to collect mucus. The nasopharynx is the uppermost part of the throat, which makes contact with the nasal cavity.Nasal or throat swab: This collects mucus from the nasal cavity or throat. Bronchial wash: This technique uses a bronchoscope, a thin tube that can enter the respiratory system. Doctors will place a saline solution into the bronchoscope before washing the airways. They will then use the bronchoscope to collect the washed mucus.Nasopharyngeal (NP) wash: This is similar to a bronchial wash, but it does not use a bronchoscope and washes mucus from the nasopharynx.Sputum: This technique involves collecting a sample of spit.Nasal aspirate: This involves using a thin tube and suction device to suck mucus from the nasal cavity.Endotracheal aspirate: Like a nasal aspirate, except that the mucus is from the windpipe, or trachea.The table below summarizes the test types, collection methods, and general waiting times for results. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) also explain how different types of tests work:Molecular assays: These include rapid molecular assays, RT-PCRs, and other nucleic acid amplification tests. They detect RNA from the flu virus, a substance that only exists when the virus is replicating.Antigen detection tests: These include rapid influenza diagnostic tests and immunofluorescence assays. The tests look for flu antigens — proteins on the surface of flu viruses that the immune system “recognizes” as a threat.Viral cultures: These include rapid and viral tissue cell cultures. They involve providing the flu virus with an ideal environment to replicate. This allows public health officials to test them more thoroughly. However, viral cultures are not useful from a diagnostic perspective, as they take too long. Research has shown that different flu tests vary in accuracy. The following table summarizes what scientists know about this, according to the CDC:A variety of locations can provide flu tests. These include doctor’s offices, hospitals, and some pharmacies. An individual who thinks they may have the flu can discuss this with a doctor, who can recommend the best place for testing.This section answers some frequently asked questions about flu tests.There is some variation in how long PCR tests take to detect flu. It all depends on the specifics of the sample and the test. Generally speaking, such tests can take between 1 and 8 hours before showing a result.There are two main types of rapid flu tests: rapid influenza diagnostic tests and rapid molecular assays.Rapid influenza diagnostic tests can detect between 50% and 70% of flu infections. For rapid molecular assays, this figure is between 90% and 95%.To perform flu tests, doctors must collect a sample. The sample collection process should only take a few moments.Rapid influenza diagnostic tests and rapid molecular assays only take between 15 and 30 minutes to provide results.Immunofluorescence, RT-PCR, and other molecular assays take between 1 and 8 hours. Viral cultures, which are not useful for diagnostic purposes, can take several days.Flu / Cold / SARSMedical Devices / DiagnosticsFlu Test timeResults timeTypes of testsAccuracyWhere to get testedTakeawayDifferent types of flu tests can take less than 1 minute to collect a specimen. However, waiting for the test results may range from 15 minutes to 3 hours, depending on the type of test you took. Share on PinterestBlake Callahan/Getty ImagesThanks to antiviral medications that can shorten the flu’s duration, getting a positive flu result may help you get treatments more effectively. Fortunately, a number of tests are available for the flu, many of which can provide rapid results. Getting a flu test isn’t usually a time-consuming experience. Your healthcare professional may use one of several approaches to collect a specimen. These include:Deep nasal swab. This testing method involves inserting a swab about one inch into the nostril. It doesn’t require inserting as deeply as a nasopharyngeal swab (see below). Nasopharyngeal or nasal aspirate. A less commonly used method, this involves using a special suction catcher to suction mucus for sample collection. When the suction catheter is very far in the back of the throat, doctors call this nasopharyngeal aspirate. Nasopharyngeal swab. For this test, you’ll be asked to tilt your head back, and a healthcare provider will swab both nostrils. The swab should be inserted to where there’s an equal distance between the nostril and the outer ear opening. Throat or nasal swab. This testing method involves using both a nasal swab as well as a throat swab that reaches back into the tonsil area of the throat. Each of these testing methods usually takes no more than 1 minute to perform. It’s waiting for your results that can prove longer. Innovations in flu testing mean that you may be able to obtain results as fast as 10 to 15 minutes. Doctors call these “rapid” tests. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), rapid flu tests are more accurate in detecting the flu in children compared with adults. With these and other flu tests, it’s still possible to get a false negative. A doctor should take your symptoms into account as well as if you’ve been around anyone who was recently diagnosed with the flu. A variety of influenza virus test types exist. Some test for the presence of the flu virus, while others test your body’s response to the virus. Examples, with their result times, include the following: Immunofluorescence. This testing type typically involves using a special microscope to identify flu antigens (antibodies to the flu). While a rapid test takes about 15 minutes till the result is available, most tests take about 2 to 4 hours to obtain results. Rapid influenza diagnostic tests (RIDTs). This type tests for the presence of viral antigens, which the body produces in response to the presence of the flu virus. However, these tests aren’t as sensitive (accurate) for the flu as others and can often read a false negative result. They also may not mean you have an active form of the flu. A person can get results within 10 to 15 minutes. Rapid molecular assays. This is a rapid test designed to identify influenza nucleic acids (genetic material). According to the CDC, the test is highly sensitive and specific for the flu. The tests can usually provide you with results in 15 to 30 minutes. Doctors call these test types point-of-care testing (POCT), which means they can be performed at the bedside without sending them to a laboratory. Reverse transcription-polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR). These testing types can also detect flu genetic material to highly accurate levels. The tests may also help determine if you have influenza type A or type B. Getting results for these tests can take between 45 minutes to upwards of 3 hours. If you see a doctor because you think you may have the flu, you can ask them what testing type they use. Generally speaking, if your flu test is positive, you have the flu. If your flu test is negative, it’s possible the test doesn’t recognize the flu strain type that you have. The person performing your flu test also may not have collected enough material to accurately detect the flu. According to the American Association of Clinical Chemistry, rapid antigen tests are about 50 to 70 percent accurate, although the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has required more recent tests to make changes to improve their results. Testing specimens are most likely to be accurate when they’re measured within 48 to 72 hours of the onset of your flu symptoms. Less is known about flu tests’ abilities to detect the flu in asymptomatic patients because most people seek the tests when they aren’t feeling well. Flu tests are available at most doctors’ offices, urgent care settings, and hospitals. Rapid flu tests are usually less costly than laboratory-based tests. According to Becker’s Hospital Review, rapid tests cost about \$5 to \$10, while a laboratory test can cost \$200 or more. You may wish to contact a facility where you’re seeking testing to ensure they have flu tests available, especially if you’re in flu season, which usually takes place in the late fall to winter. Flu tests can provide rapid results that are becoming increasingly more accurate. Doctors may select tests based on availability and accuracy.It’s important to remember that you’re more likely to have a false negative test than a false positive one. As a result, a doctor may treat your symptoms as if you have the flu, even when your test is negative.