

Understanding the Spread of COVID-19: Asymptomatic Surveillance

To better understand how COVID-19 is spreading in Manitoba, Public Health officials are conducting surveillance testing of people without symptoms of COVID-19 (asymptomatic people).

This is being done to monitor COVID-19 infections in people who are not experiencing [symptoms](#). Expanding the testing criteria to monitor the spread in people without symptoms will help officials monitor COVID-19 in Manitoba as social (physical) distancing measures are lifted.

What is asymptomatic surveillance?

Different types of surveillance systems are used to monitor the spread of COVID-19 in the community.

Officials have been testing people with symptoms of COVID-19 at [community testing sites](#). A health care provider uses a nasopharyngeal swab to take a sample and sends it to the laboratory for COVID-19 testing. This type of surveillance is called **symptomatic surveillance**. This gives public health officials information they use to take steps to prevent the virus from spreading further in the community.

Testing people without symptoms, called asymptomatic surveillance, is another way of collecting data on how COVID-19 is spread in the community. New evidence on the spread of COVID-19 suggests that infected people may spread the virus without experiencing symptoms (*asymptomatic transmission*) or just before they develop symptoms (*presymptomatic transmission*).

The extent of this *asymptomatic* or *presymptomatic* spread is currently unknown. To learn more, swabs are now being collected from people that do not have symptoms to test for COVID-19.

Who can be tested for COVID-19 as part of asymptomatic surveillance?

Individuals who are visiting a setting or facility where testing for COVID-19 is being offered will be asked if they want to participate. Your participation is voluntary. Your care will not be affected by your decision to participate, or not participate, in this test.

If you consent to having a swab taken and sent to a laboratory for testing, your personal health information will be confidentially collected. You will be able to access your test results securely online or by phone. Public health officials will contact you directly if your test results come back positive for COVID-19.

Will I need to self-isolate? Can I still work?

If you are not experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 and have not had any recent known exposures (through close contact or travel), you do NOT need to self-isolate.

If your test result comes back positive for COVID-19, you are required to self-isolate for 14 days from when your swab was taken. This could be extended if you develop symptoms at a later date. Public health officials will provide you with [additional advice](#) to care for yourself while you are recovering from COVID-19.

If I develop symptoms at a later time, will I need to be re-tested?

Yes. A negative test result only applies to the date and time when your swab was taken. You could develop symptoms of COVID-19 at a later date and time. In that case, you would need to be re-tested.

Please note that even if you test negative you still need to continue practicing good hand hygiene, cover your cough and practice good social (physical) distancing.

Where can I get more information and find out my test results?

Public health officials will contact you directly should your test result come back positive for COVID-19.

Negative results can be accessed securely online at <https://sharedhealthmb.ca/covid19/test-results/>.

If you do not have a Manitoba Health Family Registration Card, are not a resident of Manitoba, or you are unable to access your negative test results, you can call the Public Health COVID-19 Contact Centre between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., 7 days a week, at **1-844-960-1984**.

If you have any other questions about COVID-19, please call Health Links – Info Santé at **204-788-8200** or (toll free) at **1-888-315-9257**, or visit Manitoba.ca/COVID19.