

COVID-19 School Testing Program

General Information

What is the COVID-19 Testing Program?

Our COVID-19 testing program through the Houston Health Department offers free, regular testing to students and staff for COVID-19. Regular testing means that testing is offered to everyone on a regular basis, even if they don't have symptoms of COVID-19.

Why is our school testing for COVID-19?

Regular testing is a safe, effective way to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and help keep our schools open for in-person learning. Many people with COVID-19, especially children and teens, don't have symptoms but can still spread the virus, so regular testing helps find infections before they can spread to others. This is especially important for children under 12 years old who are not yet able to get vaccinated against COVID-19, families and staff with younger children at home, and others who are not vaccinated or are otherwise at risk for getting seriously sick from COVID-19. Regular testing will help us keep students in the classroom and allow students to take part in the other activities they love.

How will the school protect my child's privacy?

Testing results will be shared only for public health purposes, which may include notifying close contacts that they may have been exposed to COVID-19 and taking other steps to prevent the further spread of COVID-19 in your school community. **Information sharing and notifying of contacts will be done in a way that protects your child's privacy.** Sharing of information about your child will only be done in accordance with applicable law and policies protecting student privacy and the security of your child's data.

How the program works

How will the testing be done?

The COVID-19 testing is free, fast, and very simple. These PCR tests are conducted with a shallow nose swab that only goes half to three-quarters of an inch into the nose and is rotated three times in each nostril. The swab is administered by a qualified medical professional from Fulgent Genetics.

How much does the test cost?

The COVID-19 tests will be free to students and staff. You will never receive a bill, and your insurance will not be charged.

Will my child miss class to get tested?

No, testing shouldn't interfere with your child's school schedule. The test is quick and easy, and students will be able to fit the test into their day without disrupting learning.

Results**When will we know the results of the test?**

The results of the test should be available within one day.

Why are results not immediate?

Our testing program uses PCR (polymerase chain reaction) tests that are analyzed in a certified laboratory. These tests do not provide immediate results.

Is the test reliable?

PCR tests detect the presence of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, and are highly accurate and considered the gold standard by CDC.

CDC recommends everyone 12 years and older get a COVID-19 vaccine to help protect against COVID-19. COVID-19 vaccines are safe, effective, and free. Getting vaccinated prevents severe illness, hospitalizations, and death.

The Houston Health Department offers free vaccination and testing sites across the city. Visit HoustonHealth.org or call 832-393-4220 to find a nearby site.