

Follow-up for Positive Antigen Test Results - Version 1.0 (August 10, 2020)

A **diagnostic Antigen Test** may be used to detect the presence of viral proteins for SARS-CoV-2. Although these newer diagnostic antigen tests are faster to run, **they are less sensitive and less specific** than the molecular diagnostic PCR* test, which remains the gold standard and is the preferred test type for diagnosing acute COVID-19 infection. **It is recommended that antigen test results be confirmed by a molecular test.**

MDPH testing guidance has been updated to recommend that providers collecting a specimen for antigen testing should also collect a specimen for PCR testing to confirm the antigen test result.

- PCR specimens collected at the same time or within 2 days of the antigen test result will trump an antigen result if results are discordant.
- Because there may be a delay in receiving PCR results, positive antigen test results are presumed to be actual cases of COVID-19 until further information is available, and patients should isolate accordingly, with appropriate public health follow-up.
- If only a positive antigen test was obtained, a PCR test is recommended (but cannot be required). In the absence of a PCR result, positive antigen test results are presumed to be actual cases of COVID-19, and patients should isolate accordingly, with appropriate public health follow-up.

TABLE 1: Public Health Follow-up for when Both Antigen & PCR Specimens are Collected

Antigen Positive Result	PCR Test Obtained			
		PCR Result Pending	PCR Positive	PCR Negative
	PCR Collected within 2 Days Before or After Positive Antigen Test	Treat as a case. Isolate Case & Quarantine Contacts until PCR Results are In.	Treat as a case. Isolate Case & Quarantine Contacts.	Likely false positive. Negative PCR trumps antigen result. Isolation can be discontinued for case. Contacts do not need to quarantine.
	<i>Surveillance Case Classification</i>	PROBABLE	CONFIRMED	MAVEN event will need to be updated from PROBABLE to REVOKED.**
	PCR Collected ≥ 3 Days Before or After Positive Antigen Test	Treat as a case. Isolate Case & Quarantine Contacts. (A negative PCR result collected 3 or more days from an antigen test would not negate the positive Antigen result)	Treat as a case. Isolate Case & Quarantine Contacts.	Treat as a case. Isolate Case & Quarantine Contacts. (A negative PCR result collected 3 or more days from an antigen test would not negate the positive Antigen result)
	<i>Surveillance Case Classification</i>	PROBABLE	CONFIRMED	PROBABLE

*To evaluate individuals for current infection, a molecular diagnostic test to detect the presence of the virus by polymerase chain reaction (PCR) or other nucleic acid amplification methodology is the gold standard and is the preferred test type.

** Health agent should contact isishelp@mass.gov or the Division of Epidemiology at 617-983-6800 with MAVEN ID# for cases requiring changes in surveillance case classification status. Be sure to update notes in your MAVEN cases accordingly.