



## Loudoun County, Virginia

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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Planning to Travel or Gather with Others Over the Holidays? Be Safe: Get Tested for COVID-19**

With the fall and winter holidays approaching, Loudoun County health officials advise those who are planning to travel or gather indoors with others to take precautions against COVID-19. This includes getting tested if you think you may have COVID-19 or have been exposed to someone who has the virus.

“I encourage people who will be traveling and gathering with family and friends for Thanksgiving and other upcoming holidays to get tested before you get together with others who live outside your household regardless of their vaccination status,” said Loudoun County Health Director Dr. David Goodfriend. “Knowing whether you’re infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 before you celebrate will help you to know when you should stay home so that you don’t unknowingly spread the virus to others.”

#### **When to Get Tested**

When getting tested before traveling, you want to consider the timing. Ideally, you should take the test close to the date when you are traveling or planning to gather with others, but far enough ahead to get results.

Anyone who is exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19, such as fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath, fatigue and a new loss of taste or smell, should get tested right away. Additionally, if you know you have been potentially exposed to someone with COVID-19, regardless of your vaccination status, you should get tested 5 days after the exposure.

If you get tested because you have symptoms or were potentially exposed to the virus, you should stay away from others pending test results and follow the advice of your health care provider or a public health professional.

#### **Where to Get Tested**

- Many pharmacies and health care providers offer COVID-19 tests in Loudoun County. To find a provider near you, visit the [Virginia Department of Health’s website](https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/).
- Loudoun County provides free COVID-19 testing weekly, on Tuesdays, at various locations. For testing schedules and event details, visit [loudoun.gov/covid19testing](http://loudoun.gov/covid19testing).

#### **Types of Tests**

There are generally two types of tests available for COVID-19: an antigen test and a PCR test. Samples are typically collected with a nasal or throat swab. Some tests use saliva as a sample.

- **Antigen Test:** Antigen tests are relatively inexpensive, and results are usually returned within 15-30 minutes, although the results may not be as accurate as PCR tests. Many at-home testing kits are available at pharmacies without a prescription, and a box with two tests typically costs about \$25. Swabs, testing solution and instructions are included.
- **PCR Test:** PCR stands for polymerase chain reaction test. This is a diagnostic test that determines if you are infected by analyzing a sample to see if it contains genetic material from the virus. Results can take one-to-three days. This is the type of test that Loudoun County administers at its [weekly testing events](#).

More information about COVID-19 testing is available from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

### **Vaccination Opportunities**

Along with testing, vaccination against COVID-19 is key to ending the pandemic. Appointments at the Loudoun County vaccination clinic at the Dulles Town Center can be made [online](#) for:

- Children ages 5 to 11, who are now eligible to receive the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine.
- Residents who are 12 and older and have not yet received their first and/or second dose of COVID-19 vaccine.
- Residents who are eligible for a booster dose of the Johnson & Johnson, Moderna or Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines.

Loudoun County is currently offering all three types of vaccine (Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson). Children 17 and younger are only eligible for Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine.

You can find other vaccination opportunities at [vaccines.gov](#).

### **Other Precautions**

In addition to the approaching holidays, cold weather will lead to more people spending more time together indoors. Follow these precautions this fall and winter to stay safe:

- Wear a mask indoors when around those not in your household.
- Stay home when sick.
- Physically distance - stay 6 feet from others as much as possible.
- Avoid crowded and indoor areas where distancing is not possible, or where you will be in close contact with those whose vaccination status is unknown.
- Wash your hands with soap and water, or use hand sanitizer if soap and water is not available. This will help prevent many diseases, including the seasonal flu.
- If you are not fully vaccinated, stay away from others and get tested three-to-five days after returning home from travel.

### **For More Information**

- For more information about celebrating the holidays safely, visit the [CDC website](#).
- For additional information about COVID-19 and to sign up for COVID-19 text and email updates from Loudoun County, visit [loudoun.gov/coronavirus](https://loudoun.gov/coronavirus).
- Anyone with questions about COVID-19 may call the Health Department's information line at 703-737-8300 or email [health@loudoun.gov](mailto:health@loudoun.gov).

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