

MDS Alert

Reader Questions: Avoid Overdoing COVID-19 Testing

Question: Staff at my facility are still recovering psychologically from a COVID-19 outbreak in March. We now have better testing capabilities but are still trying to figure out best practices, in terms of timing. If we test an asymptomatic resident for COVID-19 in the morning and she develops respiratory symptoms that evening, should we test her again as soon as possible

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Answer: No, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). "Testing practices should aim for rapid turnaround times (e.g., less than 48 hours) in order to facilitate effective interventions. Testing the same individual more than once in a 24-hour period is not recommended," the CDC says in its interim COVID-19 testing guidelines for nursing homes.



Other relevant points: You mentioned having a prior outbreak and should know that the CDC does not recommend that antibody (serologic) test results be used as the sole basis to diagnose an active SARS-CoV-2 infection; they also should not be used to inform infection control and prevention.

If your facility or a clinician is testing a resident with respiratory symptoms for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, the CDC also recommends testing for other respiratory illnesses, such as influenza, simultaneously.