

Coronavirus testing for schools: get the facts



What is a coronavirus test?

- SARS-CoV-2 is the coronavirus that causes COVID-19.
- A **short anterior nasal swab** is used to collect a sample.
- A coronavirus test measures the level of SARS-CoV-2 **viral RNA** in the sample.
- **PCR-based testing is the “gold standard”** for coronavirus detection.



We are still learning:*

- How effective COVID-19 vaccines are against variants of the virus.
- How long COVID-19 vaccines can protect people.

* cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated.html

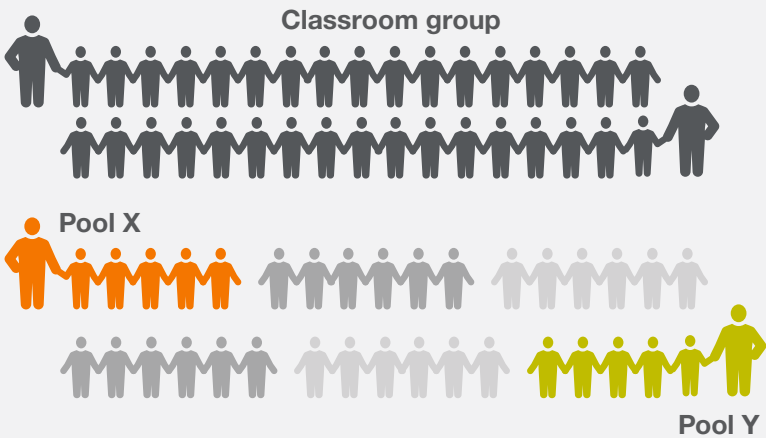
The importance of continued testing

- While mask wearing, hand washing, and social distancing help lower infection rates and lessen the spread of the coronavirus, testing remains an important safeguard.
- SARS-CoV-2 can be present in respiratory **droplets** and **airborne particles** even if you are asymptomatic.
- Testing in asymptomatic populations is critical for children, teachers, administrators, and staff to safely return to school.



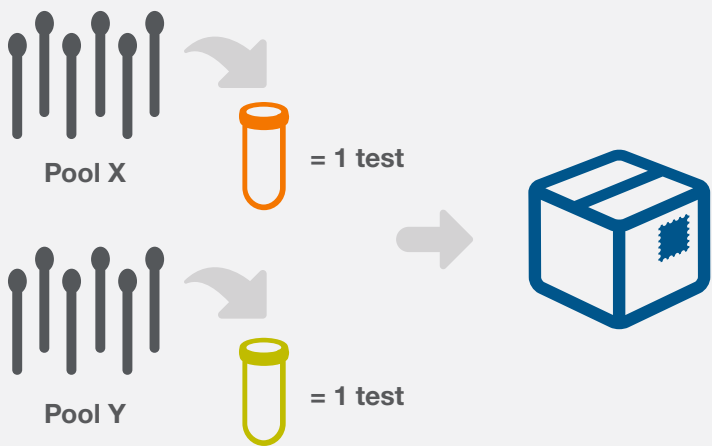
Pooling samples from a school

- **Pooling** is a testing method in which multiple individual samples are combined for a single test to make testing more efficient and affordable.
- The group to be tested is broken up into smaller pools of up to six individuals, such as **Pool X** and **Pool Y**.
- A sample from each member of the pool is added to a single tube for testing.



Pooled sample processing

- Individual swabs are placed in **one tube for each pool**. The sampling process can be done quickly to help minimize disruption in the classroom.
- The pooled samples are **shipped to the lab** the same day.



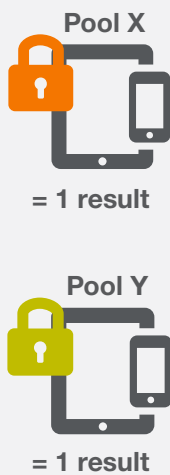
Pooled sample testing

- The pooled sample is analyzed in a **single test** at a lab using **PCR technology**, which is the most accurate type of coronavirus test.
- Tests are completed in approximately 12–48 hours.
- Each pool returns one result.



Understanding the results

- Results are shared with tested individuals and school administrators in approximately 12–48 hours.
- The result is reported as **positive or negative for the entire pool**, not the individuals who made up the pool.
- Results can be used to detect outbreaks, help mitigate risk, and make **informed decisions about in-person learning**.



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