



David Katzman, MD & Jennifer DeLaney, MD Internal Medicine Specialists

Reliable Antibody Testing Has Arrived!

David Katzman, MD

In my 23 years of practice I have never seen as much anticipation for the launching of a new test as we have seen for the antibody test for COVID-19. Many people have been exposed to COVID-19, and many others have had respiratory illnesses during the last few months and are concerned that COVID-19 was the cause. Understandably, many people desire testing to determine if they have immunity and to see if they could become potential plasma donors to help others who are infected with COVID-19.

We have been waiting for a reliable antibody test to be developed since early tests were not accurate. The test developed by Abbot and now available through Quest Diagnostics meets our high standards. This test has a sensitivity of 100% and specificity of 99%. Put another way, if we assume that the prevalence of COVID-19 infection is 5%, a negative test reliably excludes prior infection to near certainty, and a positive test predicts past infection to 85%. Please be aware that this means that 15% of people with a positive test have a **false positive** and are not in fact immune.

The Abbott test looks for IgG antibody. These antibodies are produced by your immune cells beginning approximately 3 weeks after infection and persists for months or years. **Although we believe this confers immunity to future infection, the strength and duration of this immunity is unclear at the time of this writing.** There is a high demand for testing in our practice, but we also need to be cognizant of your safety and the safety of our staff. Therefore, the testing will require a scheduled appointment, will occur outside, and we will schedule the people with highest risk for prior infection first, before opening up testing to everyone in our practice.

Guidelines for testing:

1. A credible respiratory-type illness in 2020 at least 4 weeks prior to the test
2. OR Direct contact with a known COVID-19-tested positive patient
3. AND no recent illness (within the prior 4 weeks) including fever, cough, breathing issues, sore throat or runny nose, diarrhea or loss of taste
4. Established patient of this practice

We will be drawing your blood from your car at the northern periphery of our parking lot. Please pull alongside the grey canopy. We will be scheduling appointments at 10-minute intervals Monday through Friday from 1pm until 3pm to minimize your exposure to others. If you qualify and want to be tested, please call our office beginning on Monday, April 27 at 314-993-1200. Test results should be back within 1-2 days and will be communicated to you by your physician.

At a later date, perhaps when social distancing guidelines are lifted, we will be

able to test the curious at your physical or next scheduled blood draw. You can also set up an appointment at a Quest diagnostics lab if you do not want to wait. Please let us know if you make an appointment with Quest so we can put the order in their system.

A few important issues: if you are due for other blood work and qualify for drive-through antibody testing, let us know when you set up your appointment, and we can do it at the same time. If fasting bloodwork is needed, a light early breakfast and no lunch would be ideal.

Please note: We are not sure on the insurance coverage of COVID-19 Antibody testing at this point. Quest feels it will likely be 100% covered, after meeting your deductible. You may want to check with your carrier.

Finally, if there is inclement weather, please check with our office prior to coming as the testing location may change.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact Dr. DeLaney or me. We will get through this together!

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