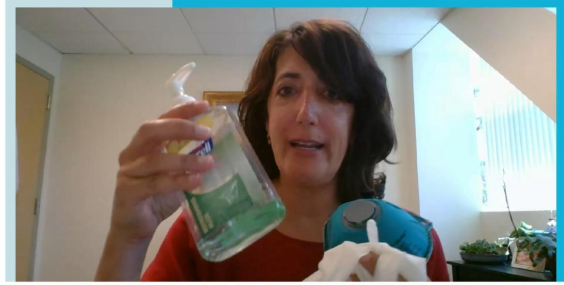


Dear Patients:

I hope you're all staying well. This week's update on COVID-19 includes some welcome signs of progress as well as some important cautions.

We are slowing the curve. Our city has done a great job with physical isolation and complying with masks and it is making an impact.

April 15, 2020 Update



COVID-19 testing. Current infection is diagnosed with a PCR test using a nasal swab. However, a shortage of nasal swabs, the reagent to test the material with and PPE (personal protective equipment) continues to be an issue in our state and throughout the country – only 0.9% of the U.S. has been tested as a result. Criteria for testing includes symptoms such as fever, cough, and shortness of breath, with same or next-day testing reserved for people over 65 and those with underlying health conditions. For more information, I recommend these sites:

[Details on our city's testing criteria](#)

[A good Q&A about COVID-19 testing](#)

Antibody testing. We all want to get back to the normal ways of living but that requires us to know both who is currently infected, using the PCR test described above, and who may be immune, through antibody testing. The hope is that people who have the antibodies can safely return to work, kids can go to school and healthcare workers would be immune to infection. There has been a lot of discussion and much written about this in the past few days as more than 70 companies have submitted their antibody tests for FDA approval. Some very important caveats:

- Many of the tests are not specific to the novel coronavirus, COVID-19, but test for antibodies to the large family of viruses that make up coronavirus.
- No home tests have received FDA approval.
- Only one lab test, Cellex, has been granted emergency use authorization by the FDA. Even Cellex however, reports a high rate of false positives (93% specificity) among the 98 patients with confirmed COVID-19 studied. That means some patients could be told they are immune to the disease when they are not.
- Other key questions remain as to how much antibody protection is needed and how long the immunity will last.

If you're interested in learning more, these articles provide excellent background:

[NPR: False Positive for Coronavirus Could Hamper Antibody Tests](#)

[ABC News: Fears of 'Wild West' as COVID-19 Blood Tests Hit the Market](#)

Please know, I only want what is best for my patients, and I don't want to give false reassurance regarding immunity. You could be putting yourself and those around you in danger. Let's be patient and wait until the FDA studies it further. I will keep you posted when a more accurate and reliable test is available.

Don't let your guard down. While we're gratified to see the curve flattening, it will only stay that way if we continue to practice all the measures we've been using: keep six feet apart from others, wear masks and gloves, and wash your hands as much as possible.

Stay safe and well,

Monica D. Sarang, MD