

IPCRG practice driven answers on COVID-19 and respiratory questions



How widely is testing for COVID being undertaken and when should we consider testing clinically?

What the research says

Testing for COVID-19 has reduced markedly since the height of the pandemic when individuals were required to isolate if they tested positive or faced other restrictions such as requiring a negative test for air travel.

Surveillance data are available from the EU (European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control 2023). As of 2023 week 14 (data from 23 countries), testing levels using any type of approved test ranged from 11 per 100,000 population (Netherlands) to 5643 per 100,000 population (Cyprus). This compares with 2022 week 14 (data from 27 countries) when testing levels ranged from 311 per 100,000 population (Poland) to 38,428 per 100,000 population (Austria).

The WHO continues to recommend testing for individuals with symptoms consistent with SARS-CoV-2 infection and that anyone testing positive should wear a mask when interacting with others (WHO 2023).

Clinically, testing for COVID-19 in symptomatic individuals might be considered if symptoms warrant treatment and therefore the test result might influence treatment decision making.

What this means for your clinical practice

- Consider testing for COVID-19 in symptomatic individuals if symptoms warrant treatment and therefore the test result might influence treatment decision making
- In households with high risk members, testing for COVID-19 in symptomatic individuals should be encouraged to minimise exposure risk

Authors

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Useful links and supporting references:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. COVID-19 testing: What you need to know. September 28, 2022. Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/testing.html>. Accessed April 2023.

European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. Data on testing for COVID-19 by week and country. Available at: <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data/covid-19-testing>. Accessed April 2023.

WHO. Coronavirus disease (COVID-19). 28 March 2023. Available at: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/question-and-answers-hub/q-a-detail/coronavirus-disease-covid-19>. Accessed April 2023.

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