

Testing Task Force Update

New tests reported: **132,932**

Average test positivity past 7 days : **3.4%**

up 1.4% from last week

Cases are rising in Europe and in the US and are starting to rise in California as anticipated for the winter season

Average Turnaround time 1.0 days

Turnaround time < 2 days: 96%

Turnaround time < 1 day: 84%

Reported December 1, 2021 with data as of Nov 30, 2021.

<https://covid19.ca.gov/state-dashboard/> <https://testing.covid19.ca.gov/>

[COVID-19 Cases Dashboard v2.0 - CA Open Data | Tableau Public](#)

Omicron

- Current antigen and PCR tests should detect the Omicron variant
- Antigen tests bind to the nucleocapsid protein which has been unchanged with Omicron. The mutation in Omicron occurred at the spike protein. Antigen test companies are working to show that their tests work against Omicron. Abbott has made a statement that they think their antigen tests should work against Omicron.
- PCR tests with a primer to a non-spike region should also work against Omicron. PCR tests in general have multiple primers targeting different regions of the viral genome. Most tests have a primer to the unchanged nucleocapsid region
- Thermofisher TaqPath tests will have a S gene or Spike gene drop out due to the mutation in Omicron at the spike region of the genome. This means that the Spike primer will not bind to the spike region of the genome due to mutation of the virus and will show up as not detected. However, the primers to the nucleocapsid region and the orf1a/b should still bind to the virus. Thus for the Thermofisher TaqPath assay one should see detected for orf1a/b and the Nucleocapsid gene and undetected for the Spike region.
- It is possible S-gene drop out will occur for other PCR tests. If this is occurring, labs should contact their local health department and work to send the specimen for sequencing.

Recommendations for testing for the holidays

- In preparation for the holiday season, California Department of Public Health would like to encourage all individuals to develop a plan to provide testing to keep people safe while gathering for the holidays.
- CDPH has published the following guidance (with key points below) for testing prior to and after gathering or traveling for the holidays.
- **Get Tested Before and After Traveling or Gathering for the Holidays**
 - **Know before you go!**
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 - Get tested 1-3 days before visiting friends or family during the holiday or prior to traveling, even if you do not have symptoms.
 - Antigen testing should be done within 24 hours prior to visiting others or traveling.
 - PCR testing should be done within 72 hours with results available prior to visiting others or traveling.
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 - **Know when you return!**
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 - Upon returning from the holidays, test on the day you return to work or school.
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 - Test again 3-5 days later.
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- **Knowing your status will keep you, your family, friends and co-workers safe.**