

May 14, 2020

Dear Patients,

Spring seems to finally have arrived and the end of the school year is in sight! I am feeling optimistic about reopening the office with the strict distancing and sanitization measures we have in place. If you have an in-person visit just remember to wear a mask and it's best to knock or poke your head inside the door when you arrive to see if we are ready for you. If we haven't gotten everything clean yet we will likely ask you to hang outside (the bench is arriving today) or in your car. Over the next few weeks, Jordyn will be reaching out to patients who had routine appointments cancelled to get these rescheduled. She and I will be working together to streamline some of the routine parts of these visits. We did our first trial yesterday and it went quite well!

I have been receiving lots of questions regarding antibody testing for COVID19 and feel that it's a complex enough topic that it warranted a detailed answer. I have been researching this in detail to determine the best way to share with you all why I do NOT recommend antibody testing at this time.

**First, what is an antibody test?**

Antibodies are proteins that the body makes to attack a virus. If you have antibodies in your system it means that you have been exposed to a particular virus. The COVID-19 antibody test looks to see whether you have been exposed to the coronavirus.

**Next, how does the antibody test differ from the diagnostic test for COVID-19 (aka PCR test)?**

The COVID-19 diagnostic test is the test that is done to determine whether you are acutely infected with the virus. This is done through a nasal swab. The diagnostic test looks for actual virus particles in the body. Generally, viral particles are only present for a few weeks. The body creates antibodies during the acute phase of the illness and typically these can be detected with an antibody test in the weeks/months after the illness.

**Is the antibody test accurate?**

Yes, depending on the situation. Two labs have recently developed tests that are nearly 100% accurate for detecting antibodies. However, in communities like ours, where the rate of infection is still extremely low, the likelihood of having a false positive (a positive result when you actually haven't been exposed to COVID-19) increases. After doing the statistical calculations, the positive predictive value (or likelihood of having an accurate positive test in our community) is worse than flipping a coin. In other words, there's less than a 50/50 chance that if you test positive the result is actually accurate. Hopefully we won't see significantly more cases in our community, but if we do, the antibody testing reliability in our community will improve.

**If I have antibodies to COVID-19 am I immune?**

Unfortunately there have been cases of people with positive antibodies getting a second acute illness with COVID19. At this point in time, the CDC states that testing positive for COVID19 antibodies does NOT reflect immunity and testing should not alter social distancing measures.

**Should I get tested?**

No, unless you are part of an epidemiological study testing for antibodies, antibody testing is not being recommended for the general public at this time. Furthermore, with a 50/50 chance of having a false positive due to our community prevalence, it's still not a great test!

I hope you all are enjoying the weather and getting outside LOTS! I enjoyed reading a recent study from China that suggested that the likelihood of transmitting the virus while outside is quite low. This doesn't mean that we should throw all caution into the wind but it is helpful to feel safe when we are enjoying the beautiful outdoors. My family has been enjoying frequent campfires in our backyard and lots and lots of walks in the woods behind our house.

Thinking of you all!

Christy Seed, DO