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Wellness

## Most COVID-19 Test Boxes Are Wrong: How to Find Your Tests' Real Expiration Dates

The FDA has extended expiration dates for several COVID-19 tests. See how long your COVID at-home tests really last.



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3 min read



That expiration date on your COVID-19 test box might not be accurate. Sarah Tew/CNET

For the most up-to-date news and information about the coronavirus pandemic, visit the [WHO](#) and [CDC](#) websites.

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You might need more [COVID-19 tests](#) now than ever before -- due to the shift [Omicron BA.5 subvariant](#), the US Food

and Drug Administration now recommends [three rapid antigen tests](#), each 48 hours apart, for people who've been exposed to COVID-19 but don't yet have symptoms.

The good news is that you can get [16 free COVID-19 tests](#) through the US Postal Service, and at-home COVID tests might last longer than their expiration dates indicate. Of the [22 at-home COVID-19 tests listed on the FDA website](#), 12 of them have had their shelf lives extended since they were released, including tests by [iHealth](#), one of the more common at-home test providers.

If you find that the expiration date for your tests has been extended, we recommend writing the new expiration date on the box. Keeping up with your at-home test kits is especially important as the [omicron BA.5 subvariant](#) continues driving COVID-19 cases.

We'll explain what the expiration dates on at-home COVID-19 tests mean, and which expiration dates have been extended based on information from the FDA. For more, here's [how effective at-home COVID-19 tests](#) are at detecting the [BA.5 variant](#).

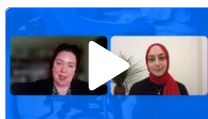
## What do COVID-19 test expiration dates mean?

The expiration date listed on your box of COVID-19 tests is the final day the test is expected to perform effectively. Generally, the FDA authorizes at-home test kits with a shelf life of about [four to six months](#), but that shelf life could be extended if the manufacturer finds more data that shows the tests are still accurate past the expiration date.

## Should I use a COVID test kit after its expiration?

No. The [FDA doesn't recommend](#) using expired at-home COVID-19 tests. Here's why: The COVID-19 test parts could degrade or break down over time, leading to inaccurate or invalid test results.

Again, it's possible the expiration dates for at-home COVID-19 test kits could be extended as more data is collected, but for now, you shouldn't use a test that's expired. But, if your box of test kits shows a past expiration date, [check this FDA list](#) of extended expiration dates to see if it's OK to use yours (more below).



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## How do I know if the shelf life of my COVID tests has been extended?

If the manufacturer finds that the shelf life is longer than the expected four to six months, it can request that the FDA authorize an extended expiration date. Once that happens, the manufacturer may notify customers of the new expiration dates. However, if you didn't buy the tests via the manufacturer, you likely won't receive any notifications.

For the latest information on the expiration dates for your COVID-19 test kits, be sure to check the FDA's [At-Home OTC COVID-19 Diagnostic Tests webpage](#).

On that page, the FDA page lists COVID-19 tests alphabetically, or you can use a search box to find your test directly. In the far right column of a table, the FDA lists the shelf life for each test and whether it's been extended. If the expiration date has been extended, an additional link will provide info on exact expiration dates for specific test lots.

The links below include lot numbers and expiration dates for the nine brands of at-home COVID-19 tests that have had their shelf lives extended by the FDA. You can find the lot number for your at-home COVID test on its box, usually on a sticker with its expiration date.

- [BinaxNOW COVID-19 Ag Card Home Test](#) from Abbott Diagnostics Scarborough
- [BinaxNOW COVID-19 Antigen Self Test](#) from Abbott Diagnostics Scarborough
- [CareStart COVID-19 Antigen Home Test](#) from Access Bio
- [Celltrion DiaTrust COVID-19 Ag Home Test](#) from Celltrion USA
- [Check-It COVID-19 Test Kit](#) from Lucira
- [ClearDetect COVID-19 Antigen Home Test](#) from MaximBio
- [Detect Covid-19 Test](#) from Detect, Inc.
- [Flowflex COVID-19 Antigen Home Test](#) from ACON Laboratories
- [iHealth COVID-19 Antigen Rapid Test](#) from iHealth Labs
- [IntelliSwab COVID-19 Rapid Test](#) from OraSure
- [Pilot COVID-19 At-Home Test](#) from SD Biosensor
- [SCoV-2 Ag Detect Rapid Self-Test](#) from InBios International

We'll continue to update this list if the FDA extends the shelf life of any other COVID-19 rapid antigen test.

For more on COVID-19 testing, here's [how to pay for home COVID tests with your FSA or HSA](#).

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