

# HOT TOPIC #35: November 12, 2020

*COVID-19 updates from San Juan County around subjects on the minds of islanders*

## Info on At-Home Testing

As we head into what may be the most challenging time yet in the COVID crisis, we want to share information about at-home testing options.

### To begin, a few key points:

1. If you are symptomatic, contact a local healthcare provider and talk about getting tested. [Stay home until you have test results back.](#)
2. Nothing below should be considered a recommendation for a particular provider. Do your research, use common sense, and know that this information may change over time.
3. If you are an islander or island visitor who receives a positive test result of any kind and are not contacted by San Juan County Health & Community Services, please call 360-370-7500.
4. We recognize that not everyone has the resources or ability to access at-home testing. San Juan County Health & Community Services will continue to work to provide asymptomatic testing options for the community. More information will be provided as that plan is finalized.

### How is at-home testing helpful?

First off, understand that testing is a very imperfect tool. You could be exposed to COVID today, but a test might not identify your infection until up to 5 days later. Any at-home testing must also include a strategy to drastically reduce your exposure before you take your test, otherwise the test result has limited value.

A situation in which at-home testing may be useful is when islanders travel to visit others, or host travelers from off-island. [Of course, the best option is to stay home and not gather with others, but if you choose to heighten exposure for yourself or others, you need to do all you can to minimize the risk.](#)

The safest thing to do if you want complete peace of mind is to quarantine yourself for 14 days before the visit and then travel in your own car with your own (also quarantined) household members. No need for an at-home test if you can do this.

At-home testing may allow for a somewhat shorter quarantine:

-At least 8 to 10 days before travel, shrink your bubble. Same for anyone else in your household (regardless of their travel plans). Then, take your at-home test five days into your quarantine. Stay quarantined until you receive your test results and then until you travel. Obviously, if you test positive, don't travel and contact your local Health Department.

-Exact timing is hard to predict, but you can order the test kit well in advance so you have it on hand well before needing to test. Turn around time once you overnight mail your sample varies with provider

but is usually 24-72 hours after the lab receives your shipment. Very best case is you quarantine for five days, take your test, and get your results in a day. Travel on day 7 or 8. That is very best case, so plan on it taking longer. Most labs ask that you only ship tests on Monday – Thursday in order to avoid weekend arrival at the lab.

-As for travel, this only works if you are driving in a car with those from your household who have also quarantined. Flying, public transport, or car-pooling increases the risk, though at-home testing is still a better approach than doing nothing. Driving is best.

-If you have been exposed during travel, the safest option is to quarantine and test again after arrival. Obviously this only works for extended trips.

Another way at-home testing may be useful is if you are asymptomatic and have been exposed to someone with COVID, or were in a situation that is high risk. In both cases, you need to be able to quarantine at home for the 5 days after exposure in addition to the time it takes to send off your sample and receive your results.

**IMPORTANT:** If you are symptomatic or can't quarantine, call your healthcare provider.

### **What is the actual process of getting an at-home test?**

It varies, but in general is something like this:

1. You enroll online, provide basic info, answer questions about your situation, provide insurance info (if appropriate and offered), or payment info.
2. You receive a kit in the mail which includes a nasal swab, a liquid transport vial, and a return mailing envelope (pre-paid).
3. You take a nasal swab (no deeper in your nose than the tip of the swab), insert swab into vial, seal, place in envelope. Most often there is an online confirmation step before you put your sample into mail.
4. Ship off your mailer the same day you take your sample and await results. They almost always arrive by text or email.
5. If you test positive, contact your local Health Department (for those in San Juan County that is at 360-370-7500).

### **Where do I do this and how much does it cost?**

Remember that details might change, but here is a snapshot of some current options:

[Pixel by LabCorp](#) – \$119 self-pay, or insurance (may be some funding for uninsured)

[LetsGetChecked](#) – \$119 self-pay

[Everywell](#) – \$109 self-pay

[Costco](#) – \$130 self-pay

New at-home services are appearing often. Each of the ones listed above offer the preferred PCR test and have established programs, but other safe and effective options are available.