How accurate are at-home COVID tests?

Rapid at-home [COVID] tests are a good option for people who have been exposed to the virus, who want to know whether a sore throat is Covid-19 or just a cold, or who want a little bit of extra assurance before visiting a vulnerable relative or after traveling to a virus hot spot, experts said.

People with symptoms can take a rapid antigen test immediately, experts said, but those who have had a known exposure to the virus should wait three to five days before doing so. Testing too soon, before the virus has had a chance to replicate, increases the odds of a false negative.

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Rapid antigen tests are highly specific, which means that they generate relatively few false positives. However, a positive result is more likely to be a false positive when the prevalence of the virus is low; in these instances, people may want to take a second test. (The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends lab-based molecular tests, like a P.C.R. test, for confirmatory testing.)

But experts recommended not waiting for the results of a second test to begin taking precautions. If you test positive, you should isolate yourself, monitor your symptoms and seek medical care if necessary.

This is an excerpt. Read the original post here.