

# COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions

**Q: Why does the number of active cases reported by CCHD fluctuate so much?**

**A:** Active cases reflect the number of individuals currently infected with COVID-19. This number can fluctuate as individuals move to the recovered category and as new cases are added. The amount of time it takes for a lab to report a test result can vary. This is not something that we have control over, but it does sometimes affect when cases are reported to the public, and how soon after being reported individuals move to the recovered category.

*Note: The isolation period for an asymptomatic person (a person who tests positive for COVID-19, but has no symptoms) begins on the date their test is collected. For a symptomatic person (a person with symptoms of COVID-19), isolation starts when their symptoms began.*

**Q: How is “recovered” defined?**

**A:** The word “recovered” is used to describe someone who is no longer infectious, or able to pass the virus to another person. This also means that when a person is “recovered,” isolation can be discontinued. A person who is recovered may still experience ongoing effects from the virus.

For full details on when a person is considered “recovered,” or when isolation can be discontinued, visit <https://bit.ly/32nBUXM>. In general, for an individual with symptoms of COVID-19, isolation starts when their symptoms began and continues for a minimum of 10 days, and until there is no fever for at least 3 days (without the use of fever-reducing medications) and symptoms have improved.

**Q: What is a probable case? Why are there still probable cases if testing is widely available?**

**A:** There are multiple criteria that may place an individual in the probable category. For the probable case definition used by NYS, visit <https://bit.ly/3en5n7o>.

Some examples of criteria that may place an individual in the probable category can include an indeterminate test result or antibody test results.

- If a person is found to have antibodies, they may also already be considered “recovered.”
- If a person receives indeterminate test results, they may be retested and subsequently test positive or negative. A person in the probable category may remain in the probable category, may be moved to the confirmed case category, or may be removed from numbers if they are determined to not be a COVID-19 case, all based on epidemiology criteria.

In addition, many probable cases occurred early in the pandemic when testing was not widely available.

*Note: This is not a category that CCHD developed. A case definition is a set of uniform criteria used to define a disease for public health surveillance. These enable public health officials to classify and count cases consistently across reporting jurisdictions.*

## COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions

**Q:** *Can a person test negative and then later test positive for COVID-19?*

**A:** Yes, you could test negative but then be exposed to COVID-19 after the test. You may also test negative if the sample was collected early in your infection. A negative test result only tells you that you were not infected, or it was too early to detect infection [on the day of the test](#). This is why certain people, including nursing home workers, are being tested frequently.

**Q:** *When will the number of positive cases go down?*

**A:** The number of positive cases of COVID-19 won't go down. It is a running total of all of the people who have had a positive test result since testing began. Active cases indicate the number of individuals currently ill or infectious with COVID-19. The active case number will increase as new cases are identified and decrease as people recover.

**Q:** *Are people who have recovered now immune to the virus?*

**A:** It is not yet known [if people who recover from COVID-19 can get infected again](#). CDC and partners in the scientific community are investigating to determine if a person can get sick with COVID-19 more than once. Until more is known, you should continue to take steps to protect yourself and others.

**Q:** *Will college students be included in case counts reported by CCHD?*

**A:** Yes, case counts reported by CCHD include anyone living in Clinton County, NY at the time of their illness (or death). Contact tracing, and isolation or quarantine orders are completed just as they would be for any other resident.