

# CDC study shows COVID-19 rapid tests not as accurate as first reported

'There is no such thing as a 100 % perfect test in medicine'

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**VIRGINIA** – COVID-19 rapid tests can deliver results in less than 15 minutes, but there are questions about their accuracy.

A **new CDC study** compared two tests that can detect an active COVID-19 infection: PCR tests and rapid antigen tests.

Researchers found that for those showing symptoms, rapid tests were right 80% of the time. That number is down from the reported 96.7% when the FDA gave emergency use authorization back in May.

In those not showing symptoms, accuracy dropped to just 41.2%. There can be false positives and false negatives too.

“We’ve known from the outset that the PCR is the gold standard,” said Dr. Cynthia Morrow, the director of the Roanoke City and Alleghany Health Districts with the Virginia Department of Health.

Dr. Brooke Rossheim from VDH’s central office said it’s not a complete surprise to those in medical field.

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“This is where it’s good to have more data,” said Rossheim.

Nearly a year into the pandemic, doctors with Centra Health said testing is still a challenge.

“Testing continues to be a moving target,” said Dr. Christopher Lewis. “We can’t do RNA testing for everybody all the time because we frankly don’t have the capability as a nation.”

Researchers recommend following up a rapid test with a PCR test if you’re feeling sick and it comes back negative or even if you feel fine and the results are positive.

“None of these tests are perfect. There is no such thing as a 100 % perfect test in medicine. It just does not exist,” said Rossheim. “But the thing is: don’t stop washing your hands. Don’t stop social distancing. Don’t stop wearing a mask. Community mitigation measures are key.”

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## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR:**



### **[Lindsey Kennett](#)**

Lindsey joined the WSLs 10 team as a reporter in February 2019 and is thrilled to call Roanoke her new home!