

DFW COVID-19 Prevalence Study

DFW COVID-19 PREVALENCE STUDY – ESSENTIAL FRONT-LINE WORKERS

UNDERSTANDING HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE CURRENTLY INFECTED OR HAVE BEEN AFFECTED

COVID-19 has infected millions of people in the United States and around the world. In Dallas-Fort Worth, cases among people who had symptoms number in the tens of thousands. Despite the high number of cases confirmed by test results, the true prevalence of COVID-19 infections (e.g., people currently infected or in the past) is unknown. Current numbers likely underestimate the true prevalence. There are many reasons for this, including poor access to testing, as well as the fact that many of those infected with COVID-19 have no symptoms or signs of the disease.

Understanding how new cases of COVID-19 infection are spreading in North Texas is critical. We also need to understand risk of exposure among vulnerable and high-risk populations like essential, front-line workers. This data will help leaders make policy decisions regarding testing as well as build infrastructure and distribute resources to prevent outbreaks in the future.

Exposure to COVID-19 and risk of infection may depend on several individual and community-level factors. For example:

- Nationwide, non-Hispanic blacks account for approximately one-third of COVID-19-related hospitalizations despite only accounting for 13 percent of the population.
- A higher proportion of COVID-19 cases have occurred among persons with certain occupations, including healthcare workers, first responders, and day care and grocery store employees, as well as those who have not been able to engage in social distancing.

HOW YOU AND YOUR EMPLOYEES CAN HELP

UT Southwestern and Texas Health Resources are joining forces to conduct a large COVID-19 prevalence study that includes Tarrant and Dallas counties. The study has two main components:

1. A random, population-based sample of 30,000 households in Dallas and Tarrant counties
2. A sample of 14,000 high-risk individuals in non-medical occupations

Both groups will receive a nose swab to test for active infection and a blood antibody test to check for prior exposure to the virus. Local businesses like yours, from a variety of industries, have agreed to partner with us and invite their employees for the occupation-based sample.

WHICH EMPLOYEES ARE ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE?

Front line workers are eligible to participate.

- Front line workers are defined as employees in essential industries who must physically show up to their jobs at a work location outside of their home.



- These workers may frequently be in close physical proximity to customers and colleagues.
- Employees do not have to reside in Dallas or Tarrant County as long as they work in either of these counties.

THE TESTING PROCESS

First, employees are invited to complete a survey. Then, the study team will identify the employees who meet study eligibility criteria (i.e., works on the front-line) and will invite them to schedule a testing appointment. We will work with you to facilitate employee access to testing with either on-site testing (e.g., in a breakroom or empty office) or scheduling at one of the many community testing sites across Dallas and Tarrant counties. Each employee will be informed of study processes and must sign a consent form to participate in the study.

Employees will schedule appointments for testing, which will last approximately 15-20 minutes. The testing includes a simple nose swab and blood test. Employees should be allowed the time to participate in the study without penalty.

TEST RESULT REPORTING

If an individual is found to have a current, active COVID-19 infection, they will be notified within two days. Otherwise, participants will receive results within two weeks. An individual's positive test for active COVID-19 will also be reported to the employer's occupational health or human resources department, and the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS). The employer will receive this information to minimize worksite-based exposure and spread of infection. The study team is required to report to DSHS to ensure contact tracing of the individual's household members and other close contacts. We encourage employers to allow employees who test positive for COVID-19 time to get well without risking their job upon their recovery (e.g., they should not be furloughed, etc.).

In terms of antibody test results (i.e., evidence of past infection), each business partner will receive an aggregate report of all test results, not individual results. Antibody test results will not be shared with DSHS.

The positivity rate of a particular business will not be reported to the public. The study team will report the positivity rate only by sector (airline, restaurant, grocery store, etc.). When releasing results, the study team will make clear that the location or source of exposure (at home, worksite or via community transmission) is impossible to determine based on test results.