

National Jewish Health Launches Additional Coronavirus Test

Novel Method Increases Testing Capacity

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DENVER — National Jewish Health has added a new molecular test and platform to detect the SARS-CoV-2 virus. The test uses a novel method, which has a high level of accuracy while also increasing capacity to diagnose COVID-19.



“As an institution with a long history of treating severe lung, heart and immune-related diseases, it is our mission to help lead the fight in this pandemic by providing critically needed testing, treatment and research for COVID-19 patients,” said Steve Frankel, M.D. executive vice president clinical affairs, at National Jewish Health “This new SARS-CoV-2 test adds another reliable testing mechanism as we expand testing even more broadly for our patients and the community.”

Increased testing capacity is widely considered crucial for understanding and controlling the pandemic. National Jewish Health offers both molecular testing to diagnose COVID-19 and antibody testing to identify people who have had the disease. The new molecular test uses a novel method that relies on mass spectrometry to identify viral particles by weight rather than with fluorescent markers.

“This novel method is very sensitive, capable of detecting minute amounts of the virus in samples obtained by nasal swab,” said Yongbao Wang, PhD, Senior Director of Strategic Innovation, the Advanced Diagnostic Laboratories, National Jewish Health. “By eliminating the use of fluorescent markers, the new test reduces the need for costly reagents and avoids potential supply chain issues.”

National Jewish Health collaborated with Agena Bioscience to develop the assay, which will run on the Agena Bioscience® MassARRAY® System. National Jewish Health has a SARS-CoV-2 panel available through Emergency Use Authorization from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Agena Bioscience has released a panel it intends to submit to the FDA for review.

“The release of the SARS-CoV-2 panel is a major milestone demonstrating how the MassARRAY System is a robust and high-throughput tool for responding to this crisis,” said Peter Dansky, Chief Executive Officer of Agena Bioscience. “We are proud to be part of a partnership that serves communities impacted by COVID-19.”

National Jewish Health first began offering molecular viral tests in mid-March and added antibody tests with availability to the public as well as with a physician order in early May. Since then, researchers and scientists have focused on increasing testing capacity to meet the needs of patients and the community at large.

The new test will require a physician's order. Antibody tests are still available to the public without a doctor's order, though appointments are required. Both tests are provided at the outdoor testing site next to the National Jewish Health campus, in the parking lot between 13th and 14th Ave.

National Jewish Health is the leading respiratory hospital in the nation. Founded 121 years ago as a nonprofit hospital, National Jewish Health today is the only facility in the world dedicated exclusively to groundbreaking medical research and treatment of patients with respiratory, cardiac, immune and related disorders. Patients and families come to National Jewish Health from around the world to receive cutting-edge, comprehensive, coordinated care. To learn more, visit the media resources page.

Media Contacts

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