## The Differences Between Using PCR vs Antigen Testing

### RT-PCR

**Characteristics:**
- PCR stands for **Polymerase Chain Reaction**
- Detects: **viral genetic information**
- Good sensitivity: amplifies RNA and able to detect small traces

**When to Use:**
- Asymptomatic
- Early infection (1-2 days before or after symptoms)
- Suspected or known exposure
- Meets documentation requirements (travel, school, or work)

### Antigen

**Characteristics:**
- Detects: **coronavirus protein spikes**
- Higher sensitivity:
  - if positive, likelihood of positive is high (83%)
- Lower sensitivity: requires larger amounts of virus to detect

**When to Use:**
- Symptomatic
- Test on Day 5 to determine when to end isolation
  - **Positive:** continue to isolate 7-10 days
  - **Negative:** no longer infectious (end isolation)