

THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN USING PCR VS ANTIGEN TESTING



RT-PCR

ANTIGEN

CHARACTERISTICS:

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

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:

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

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)