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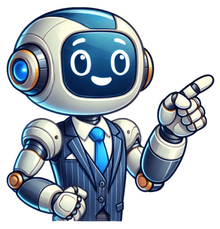

Covid flu test at home

New home tests now available at pharmacies can detect both COVID-19 and the flu simultaneously, providing an easier way for people to get tested during this year's flu season. The FDA has approved nine over-the-counter tests, including one that recently received full authorization. These tests work similarly to the DIY COVID tests from the pandemic and provide quick results within 15 to 30 minutes. They can help individuals determine whether they have a positive result for SARS-CoV2 or one of two strains of flu virus. Knowing the type of virus can aid in making informed decisions about treatment and medication, such as antiviral medications like Paxlovid for COVID or Tamiflu for the flu. New rapid antigen tests (RATs) have been approved for home use, allowing people to distinguish between flu and COVID with a single swab. These combo tests are not only faster but also more convenient than traditional methods, as per Dr. Chaz Langelier, an infectious disease expert from the University of California, San Francisco. The tests work by detecting antibodies for influenza A, B, and SARS-CoV-2, providing quick results that can help individuals take necessary precautions to prevent transmission. With several combo home tests available on the market since September 2022, people can now check if they are infected with both types of flu (influenza A and B) and COVID using a single test kit. According to Langelier, understanding one's infection status early on can effectively help prevent transmission to others, making it a significant advancement in public health. Given article text here The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation recommends adults wait six months after a COVID infection to get a booster. Knowing whether you have COVID or flu helps determine when to take antiviral treatment and boosters, as medications differ for each illness. It also enables taking steps to protect others, such as wearing masks in public and avoiding close contact with vulnerable individuals. When choosing a test, it is essential to consider the type and sensitivity of the test. The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) lists approved tests on its website. Combination tests, which are currently available, use nasal swabs and have high sensitivity rates. However, if symptoms persist, taking another test may help confirm the presence of a virus. It is crucial to follow specific instructions for each test, as prices vary widely depending on the brand. While flu vaccines can reduce the risk of catching the flu by 40-60%, it's essential to note that not all viruses and health conditions cause respiratory symptoms. If concerned, consulting a doctor is recommended. Patient expresses frustration with pharmacy organization, citing long queues and inefficient service. They recount a personal experience where they waited over an hour for a prescription, only to be told it was out of stock due to the patient's Parkinson's disease diagnosis. The staff at both pharmacies involved were deemed unhelpful and dismissive. This incident is not an isolated case, as the patient has had similar experiences in the past with medication delivery. Meanwhile, a separate issue discusses the availability of at-home flu tests for detecting COVID-19, influenza A, and influenza B. These tests can provide results within 30 minutes and are available over-the-counter (OTC) for home use. The article advises individuals who are feeling unwell to take these tests to determine the cause of their infection and receive proper treatment. It is essential for people in high-risk groups, such as young children, older adults, pregnant individuals, and those with compromised immune systems or certain medical conditions, to get tested promptly if they experience symptoms of a respiratory infection. These infections can range from mild to severe and may not always exhibit noticeable symptoms. Given article text here The symptoms of influenza and COVID-19 can be similar, making it difficult to determine which illness you have based solely on your symptoms. However, using an over-the-counter (OTC) test can provide quick results and help prevent the spread of the virus. The incubation period for COVID-19 is generally longer than that of the flu, with symptoms appearing anywhere from two to five days after infection, and sometimes up to 14 days. The flu, on the other hand, typically starts showing symptoms within one to four days after infection. Another key difference between the two illnesses is their contagious periods. While the flu can be transmitted about a day before symptoms appear, COVID-19 can be spread for two to three days before symptoms show up. Additionally, COVID-19 can be transmitted for eight or more days after getting sick, even if you never have symptoms. OTC test kits, such as the Lucira at-home flu test kit, not only detect the presence of the flu but also test for COVID-19. These tests can provide a quick diagnosis and help determine whether antiviral treatments are needed for COVID-19 infection. They can also guide individuals in taking necessary precautions to prevent spreading the virus to others. The cost of these tests varies depending on the retailer, with some options available for $49.99 or $84. It's essential to check with your insurance provider to see if the test is covered under your health plan benefits. The at-home flu and COVID-19 test can be used by individuals experiencing symptoms of a respiratory virus. To use the test, first swab both nostrils five times, then insert the swab into the vial and swirl it around 15 times before removing and discarding the swab. Next, snap the vial cap closed and push the vial into the test unit. The ready light will blink to confirm the sample is processing, and if it doesn't within five seconds, try pushing the vial down again firmly. After testing, dispose of all materials and wait for 30 minutes or less for the results to be displayed on the test unit. The device has separate lights for influenza A, influenza B, and COVID-19, with positive results flashing on the right side and negative results flashing on the left. However, if the result is invalid, both lights may flash. The test's accuracy has been tested in trials, showing 99.3% sensitivity for negative Influenza A samples and 90% sensitivity for positive Influenza A samples. Similarly, it achieved 100% sensitivity for negative COVID-19 samples and 88.3% sensitivity for positive COVID-19 samples. However, like any test, the at-home flu and COVID-19 test may produce false negatives or false positives. If symptoms persist despite a negative test result, consult a healthcare provider. If a test is positive for flu or COVID-19, inform a healthcare provider to discuss management options and determine if antiviral medications are needed. Taking precautions such as isolating at home, wearing masks, and washing hands frequently can help reduce the spread of infection. Home flu test kits have been made available by Lucira, allowing people to test themselves at home. These kits can detect influenza A, B and COVID-19. However, retail stores are yet to be confirmed as a sales location. The test involves collecting a nasal swab and putting it into the test vial. The results will show if you have influenza or COVID-19. It is recommended that healthcare providers be informed if you have positive test results for either illness, so they can advise on treatment options. The symptoms of upper respiratory infections are similar, making it difficult to identify which illness you have. At-home rapid tests can now determine whether someone has COVID-19 or the flu. Thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic, people now have the option to use over-the-counter tests at home to diagnose respiratory illnesses. These tests usually involve a less invasive nasal swab and can be done by anyone, anywhere. However, they were initially designed only for COVID-19 diagnosis and couldn't distinguish between other types of illnesses. Recently, researchers have developed multiplex rapid tests that can screen for multiple respiratory infections simultaneously. There are two main types of at-home COVID-19 and flu combination tests: molecular tests like PCR, which detect genetic material from the virus, and antigen tests, also known as rapid tests, which detect proteins called antigens. Most over-the-counter tests on the market are antigen tests that look for specific viral antigens in nasal secretions. If these antigens are present, it's likely an infection. To detect these antigens, rapid tests use paper-like strips with specially engineered antibodies that function like molecular Velcro, sticking only to specific viral antigens. Scientists design and manufacture these strips to recognize specific viral targets, such as influenza A, B, or the virus causing COVID-19. Rapid antigen tests have limitations, including lower sensitivity compared to lab-based PCR tests. They may miss some infections, so people should retest 48 hours later if they get a negative result but are still experiencing symptoms. Currently, these tests can only detect COVID-19, influenza A, and B, and not other viruses like adenovirus or strep. Multiplex rapid tests, on the other hand, can detect several different viruses at once, producing more complex results to interpret. In 2023, Pfizer's Lucira test became the first at-home diagnostic test for both COVID-19 and influenza to gain emergency use authorization. The current diagnostic methods may be prone to misinterpretation, with a patient mistakenly identifying one infection as another. To address this issue, researchers are working on developing even more advanced tests that are more sensitive and can simultaneously detect a broader range of viruses or bacterial infections. Furthermore, scientists are investigating the possibility of using saliva samples in tests for bacterial or viral infections. Moreover, they are exploring the integration of multiplex tests with smartphones for rapid at-home diagnosis and reporting to healthcare providers. This could increase accessibility for individuals with vision impairment, low dexterity, or other challenges conducting and interpreting tests. Faster and more accurate diagnoses can lead to targeted and effective treatment plans, potentially reducing unnecessary antibiotic use and improving patient outcomes. Additionally, the ability to rapidly identify and track outbreaks can empower public health officials to better mitigate the spread of infectious diseases.