

# Public Health Special Press Release

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## Ravalli County Community Snapshot Testing Update

The Community Snapshot COVID-19 Tests were processed at two separate labs. One portion was processed at the Montana Public Health lab, and the remaining portion was processed at the state's reference lab, Mako medical lab in Raleigh, NC. The two batches of test results were received separately. The first batch of results were received yesterday prior to the daily press release, and the remaining portion was received later in the day, after the community update had already been released.

Of the PCR tests administered to the community:

- **The vast majority of Community Snapshot tests were labeled COVID-19 “not detected”**
  - All negative tests will receive a letter in the mail from Public Health.

**This Community Snapshot COVID-19 Testing gives the Public Health Department helpful insights about the moment in time when the tests were administered.**

- This information confirms that many county residents are being vigilant in their efforts to protect themselves and their community.
- Please remember: Anyone can contract and/or transmit this virus, even if you have been tested recently.
  - **Public Health knows of at least two individuals who tested negative during the Community Snapshot Testing and subsequently tested positive the following week.**

Some limits to this test:

- The Antigen test cannot definitively rule out an active coronavirus infection.
- The Antigen test is not designed to detect antibodies, which would indicate whether a person had been infected in the past.

A few things to consider with this outcome:

- The sample of people tested were volunteers, and not a random sampling of a target population.
  - This outcome could be influenced by this group's tendency to take more precautions regarding personal behaviors during this pandemic (e.g. taking the opportunity to get tested/wearing a mask); this sample group may be more likely to take actions consistent with Public Health recommendations.
- For added safety, citizens were tasked with procuring the sample themselves by self-administering nasal swabs.
  - The chances of improper test sample gathering increase during self-administered swabbing.
- The chance of “false negatives” with the Antigen test can be due to many variables.
  - The FDA notes that “you may have the virus, but the swab might not collect it from your nose or throat.”
  - “The nasal or throat swab may not be kept at the correct temperature before it can be analyzed.”
  - “The chemicals used to extract the virus genetic material and make copies of the virus DNA may not work correctly.”

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