

## THE TRUSTEE

May2020  
COVID-19 UPDATES

**T**wo kinds of tests are available for COVID-19 testing: Viral tests & Antibody tests.

- 1) A viral test tells you if you have a current infection
- 2) An antibody test tells you if you had a previous infection. An antibody test may not be able to show if you have a current infection, because it can take 1-3 weeks to make antibodies after symptoms occur. We do not know yet if having antibodies to the virus can protect someone from getting infected with the virus again, or how long that protection might last.

### WHO SHOULD BE TESTED

To learn if you have a current infection, viral tests are used. But not everyone needs this test. There is a wide range of symptoms from mild to severe illness. Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. Symptoms include: cough, shortness of breath/difficulty breathing, or, at least two of these symptoms: fever, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, and new loss of taste or smell. Seek medical attention if you have these warning signs: trouble breathing, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion or inability to arouse, or bluish lips or face.

COVID-19 diagnostic tests are available at drive-up centers, including Grand Street in Kingston where a doctor's referral is not needed, and, now, at Rite Aide pharmacies, including the Rite Aide on Flatbush Ave. in Kingston. You need to register first at [www.riteaide.com](http://www.riteaide.com).

### ANTI-BODY TESTS

Serological tests for COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2) are intended for individuals who may have had COVID-19 symptoms but are no longer symptomatic. The tests determine the presence of antibodies to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, and can help to identify individuals who have been exposed to the virus.

Understanding if an individual has developed the antibodies and a potential immune response can be useful in the determination of important decisions such as the ability for hospital staff to care for patients. The priority is for the testing of frontline workers. Originally, as of March 16, the FDA approved of many types of unproven tests. This "wild west" approach has now been modified. As of now, the FDA has approved four (4) EUA's for serological tests. Results can help inform who may qualify to donate blood that can be used to manufacture convalescent plasma. Presently, antibody tests, as part of COVID-19 testing, have no copay, but medical plans are being charged an average of \$119/test. As this is a test for healthier people to benefit ill people during a health crisis, it would seem the government should support "totally free" testing. Now, toward that end, NYC is sponsoring "totally free" antibody tests and HealthAlliance is offering "totally free" antibody tests to first responders, only.

"The New York City Health Department has sent an alert to all medical providers advising NOT to use anti-body tests to diagnose prior COVID-19 infection nor to assess immunity due to the high rate of false/positives and uncertainty about how immunity works."(4/22/20).

The most recent (May 5, 2020) CDC Recommendation: For persons recovered from COVID-19 illness, CDC recommends that isolation be maintained for at least 10 days *after illness onset* and at least 3 days (72 hours) *after recovery*. Illness onset is defined as the date symptoms begin.

Recovery is defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications with progressive improvement or resolution of other symptoms. Full report at: [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/strategy-discontinue-isolation.html?deliveryName=USCDC\\_2067-DM27395](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/strategy-discontinue-isolation.html?deliveryName=USCDC_2067-DM27395)

### **RetireeRx**

Informational mailings are being sent to all Medicare Retirees regarding the implementation of the RetireeRx program beginning July 1. In essence, any drugs that you would usually receive from ProAct will now be provided by RetireeRx. Following the formatted letter, eligible members will receive a new RETIREERX ID card. As the program is processed through ProAct, the transition requires limited member action.

### **MAIL ORDER**

Any existing mail order maintenance drugs will be automatically adjusted by ProAct to go through RetireeRx.

### **LOCAL Rx**

When filling a prescription through a retail pharmacy, present your new RetireeRx ID card. Although most retail pharmacy Rx is for a 30 day filling, RetireeRx does allow you to fill a 90 Rx. It should be noted the copay differential favors mail order. And, mail order provides a safer alternative during COVID-19.

### **CANARX**

Members should continue to use CanaRx, with no copay, for all available Brand Name drugs (KTFMeds.com).

### **DENTAL PREMIUM NOTICES**

Retiree dental premium notices for payment of the first half of the 2020-21 annual premium are being mailed to existing retirees with dental coverage. Payment is due to the Trust Office by June 30, 2020. Any retirees who is not enrolled for dental coverage and would like to enroll should contact the Trust Office by May 31.

### **EOB's On Line**

Letters are being forwarded to members with instructions on how to create your personal Explanation of Benefits (EOB) on line. Every member 18 and older will have their own EOB account. To create a good password for the account, please use 8 spaces that include a capital letter, a small letter, a number, and an icon.

IN MEMORIAM: Mary Ann Decker