Louisiana Department of Health adds antigen tests to COVID-19 dashboard

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The Louisiana Department of Health on Friday began incorporating antigen tests into the state's COVID-19 data reporting and dashboard.

There are two different types of COVID tests – diagnostic tests and antibody tests. An antigen test is a type of diagnostic test. A diagnostic test can show if you have an active COVID-19 infection and should take steps to isolate yourself from others, and if your close contacts will need to quarantine themselves to protect the larger community. In some settings an antigen test will need to be confirmed with a more accurate and definitive molecular/PCR test.

The use of antigen tests in Louisiana has increased substantially over the past few weeks.

On the COVID-19 dashboard, antigen tests are now included in Total Cases, which are then broken down into Confirmed Cases (molecular/PCR) and Probable Cases (antigen). Antigen tests are also now included in Total Tests, which are similarly broken down so one can see which are antigen tests and which are PCR tests.

Antigen tests are now included in all relevant graphs and charts throughout the dashboard.

It is important to note that at this time, PCR tests will continue to be the only type of test used to calculate percent positivity. This follows current best practices and the guidance of The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Additionally, the reporting of parish, region and state percent positivity will be standardized as a weekly-cumulative metric throughout the dashboard.

Testing for COVID-19 is a key tool in responding to the pandemic. It provides vital information about who is likely to have active infection and when they should isolate to prevent the spread of the virus.