



Daily Mail

# Experts: US COVID-19 positivity rate high due to 'too sensitive' tests

Marlene Lenthang For Dailymail.com 8/30/2020



Up to 90 percent of people tested for COVID-19 in Massachusetts, New York and Nevada in July carried barely any traces of the virus and it could be because today's tests are 'too sensitive', experts say.

Health experts say PCR testing - the most widely used diagnostic test for COVID-19 in the US - are too sensitive and need to be adjusted to rule out people who have insignificant amounts of the virus in their systems because they're likely not contagious.

Today the PCR test, which provides a yes or no answer if a patient is infected, doesn't say how much of the virus a patient has in their body.

PCR tests analyze genetic matter from the virus in cycles and today's tests typically take 37 or 40 cycles, but experts say this is too high because it detects very small amounts of the virus that don't pose a risk.

Doctors say fewer cycle thresholds, meaning the number of cycles needed to detect the virus, hone in on those with greater amounts of the virus who do pose risks, according to the New York Times.



© Provided by Daily Mail The coronavirus death rate may be low compared to high infection rate because standard tests are diagnosing huge numbers of people who may be carrying 'relatively insignificant' amounts of the virus, experts say



On Thursday the US recorded 1,700 new coronavirus cases. If the rates of contagiousness in Massachusetts and New York were to apply nationwide, that would mean only about 4,500 of those people may actually need to isolate and participate in contact tracing.

As of Sunday the US had a daily positivity rate of 8.62 percent, according to Johns Hopkins. The World Health Organization has said that countries that have conducted extensive testing for COVID-19, should remain at 5 percent or lower for at least 14 days before reopening.

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