CBS New York

Saliva-Based COVID-19 Test Developed At Yale University Could Be A 'Game Changer'

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NEW HAVEN, CT (CBSNewYork/CNN) – After months of frustration over testing shortages and delays, a new saliva test could give Americans a fast and inexpensive option to learn if they have COVID-19.

Researchers from the Yale School of Public Health created the SalivaDirect test, which received emergency use authorization from the Food and Drug Administration on Saturday.

"The SalivaDirect test for rapid detection of SARS-CoV-2 [the novel coronavirus] is yet another testing innovation game changer that will reduce the demand for scarce testing resources," said Adm. Brett Giroir, the US official in charge of COVID-19 testing efforts.

Unlike some other tests that require specialized supplies, the SalivaDirect test doesn't require a specific swab or collection device. It can also be used with reagents from multiple vendors.

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"We simplified the test so that it only costs a couple of dollars for reagents, and we expect that labs will only charge about $10 per sample," said Nathan Grubaugh, a Yale assistant professor of epidemiology.

"If cheap alternatives like SalivaDirect can be implemented across the country, we may finally get a handle on this pandemic, even before a vaccine."

Researchers said the new test can produce results in less than three hours, and the accuracy is on par with results from traditional nasal swabbing. They said SalivaDirect tests could become publicly available in the coming weeks.

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Yale plans to publish its protocol as "open-source," meaning designated labs could follow the protocol to perform their own tests according to Yale's instructions, the FDA said.

The NBA was among the groups that funded research for the test and currently uses the method to test for nonsymptomatic carriers of the virus.

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