

## COVID-19 study: 8.4% of Belgian health workers have antibodies to SARS-CoV-2

The study was carried out by Sciensano, the Belgian public health institute and ITM.

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Dit is de omschrijving

**In early May, 8.4% of health workers in Belgian hospitals had antibodies to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. This is the conclusion of a study by Sciensano, the Belgian public health institute and ITM in Antwerp.**

Between 6 and 10 May, 785 blood samples were collected from a cohort of health workers (80% paramedics and 20% doctors) in Belgian hospitals. Half of these workers are over 39 years old, the others between 20 and 67 years old and the majority (80%) are women. Tests were carried out on personnel of COVID and non-COVID units and the study also included staff who previously tested positive.

These results cover infections that occurred at least two weeks before the blood samples were taken. In addition, more than 90% of participants who tested positive for antibodies reported at least one COVID-19 symptom since the onset of the epidemic. It appears that, proportionally, about twice as many hospital health workers have antibodies to the virus that causes COVID-19, compared to the healthy, adult population (4.3% antibodies as shown in a study in collaboration with the Belgian Red Cross - Flanders). Although hospital health workers are at higher risk than others for exposure to the virus, the presence of antibodies is not as high as expected. The presence of antibodies does not necessarily say anything about possible protection against subsequent exposure to SARS-CoV-2 and requires further follow-up and research.

We will continue to monitor these same health workers until the end of September 2020 and collect their blood every month to evaluate changes in the presence of antibodies to SARS-CoV-2.