

Letter to School Communities

In an effort to help slow the spread of COVID-19, reduce absenteeism, and to continue to support our school communities, the **Waterloo Region District School Board** is pleased to offer rapid antigen test kits for **symptomatic** students and staff. In alignment with the updated testing guidance from Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health, when a student or staff member returns from an unplanned absence, they are able to receive a rapid antigen test kit, to be used only if the individual is experiencing symptoms compatible with COVID-19.

The test kit provided to you contains five (5) rapid antigen tests. This testing option is **voluntary** for students, children and staff. If a symptomatic individual chooses **not** to participate, they are presumed positive and should isolate immediately and follow updated testing guidance:

https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/contact_management/management_cases_contacts_omicron.pdf

Please read the information below carefully, if choosing to participate.

When to Use a Take-home Rapid Antigen Screening Kit:

- For individuals choosing to participate in this testing option, they must display symptoms commonly associated with COVID-19. As outlined in the updated guidance (https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/2019_reference_doc_symptoms.pdf), this includes:
 - Fever and/or chills; OR
 - Cough; OR
 - Shortness of breath; OR
 - Decrease or loss of taste or smell; OR
 - **Two or more of:**
 - runny nose/nasal congestion
 - headache
 - extreme fatigue
 - sore throat
 - muscle aches/joint pain
 - gastrointestinal symptoms (i.e. vomiting or diarrhea)
- Symptomatic individuals must complete the rapid antigen tests at home.
- If the first RAT test is positive there is no need to use the second test. A positive RAT is highly indicative that the individual has COVID-19. A positive RAT does NOT need to be confirmed with a PCR test. Positive RAT tests do NOT need to be reported to the public health unit, school or child care
- If the first RAT test is negative complete the second test separated by 24-48 hours.

Using the Take-home Rapid Antigen Screening Kit:

- There are 3 different varieties of rapid antigen tests that are being distributed by the province. Please see the links below for instructions on how to use each variety:
 1. **BTXN Rapid Response™:**
<https://www.ontariohealth.ca/sites/ontariohealth/files/2022-01/BTNXSelfScreeningInstructions.pdf>
 2. **SD Biosensor:** <https://www.ontariohealth.ca/sites/ontariohealth/files/2021-12/SDBiosensorSelfScreeningInstructions.pdf>
 3. **Trimedica FaStep®:**
<https://www.ontariohealth.ca/sites/ontariohealth/files/2022-01/Trimedica%20Self%20Screening%20Instructions.pdf>
- The Ontario COVID-19 Science Advisory Table has updated the recommendations for **how to complete an oral/nasal swab** used for rapid antigen testing. This is an optional swabbing approach. Directions on how to collect a sample can be found here:
<https://www.ontariohealth.ca/sites/ontariohealth/files/2022-02/COVID-19RapidAntigenTests-HowtoCollectaSample.pdf>
- You may also reference this how-to video for a nasal swab:
<https://youtu.be/EWSFJ1JoUd0>

Please note: When rapid antigen tests are used according to instructions, they do not pose a risk to the health of Ontarians. Note that the liquid in the tubes can irritate your eyes and skin and is dangerous if swallowed. If the liquid accidentally touches your skin, wash it with plenty of water. If it touches your eyes or mouth, rinse with plenty of water for 15 minutes and contact your healthcare provider or the Ontario Poison Centre (1-800-268-9017) for assistance.

Important note: Parents or guardians may choose to administer this screening on children who may need help (i.e. younger children).

What to do after your test:

- You will know the outcome of the test within 15 minutes.
- **If the first rapid antigen test is positive**, there is no need to use the second test. A positive rapid antigen test is highly indicative that the individual has COVID-19. Positive rapid antigen tests do NOT need to be reported to the public health unit, school or child care.
- **If the first rapid antigen test is negative**, complete the second test within 24-48 hours of the first test. If two consecutive rapid antigen tests, separated by 24-48

hours, are both **negative**, the symptomatic individual is less likely to have COVID-19 infection, and the individual should isolate until symptoms are improving for at least 24 hours (or 48 hours if gastrointestinal symptoms are present).

- If the individual who tests **positive** is fully vaccinated or 11 years of age or younger, they must self-isolate for at least 5 days from symptom onset and until their symptoms have been improving for 24 hours (or 48 hours if gastrointestinal symptoms), whichever is longer in duration.
- If the individual who tests **positive** is 12 years of age or older and is either partially vaccinated or unvaccinated they must self-isolate for 10 days from symptom onset or from the date of their test (whichever was earlier).
- If the individual who tests **positive** is immune compromised (regardless of age and vaccination status) they must self-isolate for 10 days from the onset of symptoms, or from the date of their test (whichever came sooner).
 - If symptoms persist / worsen, individuals are encouraged to seek advice from Telehealth or their health care provider.

Please note that the Chief Medical Officer of Health has updated guidance for anyone who has had a positive test result (molecular/PCR or RAT). Individuals who receive a positive test result **should not participate in antigen testing for 30 days** from their COVID-19 infection (based on the date of their symptom onset or test). After this period, symptomatic individuals can resume COVID-19 rapid antigen testing in accordance with:

https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/contact_management_cases_contacts_omicron.pdf