

Rapid Asymptomatic COVID-19 Screening: Program Overview

What is a Screening Test?

A screening test is done to detect potential health diseases in people who do not have any symptoms of disease (i.e. they are asymptomatic). When a rapid COVID-19 test is used in people without symptoms, it is a screening test, not a diagnostic test. Screening individuals with rapid tests can identify some, but not all, asymptomatic and pre-symptomatic cases and can limit viral transmission by isolating infected people earlier. Those who have a negative result may still be infected with COVID-19 and be able to spread it to others.

Rapid screening does not replace public health measures such as physical distancing, masking, hand hygiene, staying home and accessing testing when sick, and the mandatory isolation of COVID-19 cases. Close contacts of those who have tested positive for COVID-19 are no longer legally required to quarantine but should follow Alberta's [guidance for those exposed to COVID-19](#).

Rapid Asymptomatic COVID-19 Screening in Alberta

Alberta Health has a supply of rapid COVID-19 test kits that are available, at no charge, to select public, private, and not-for-profit employers and service providers to support COVID-19 screening programs in their facilities. The goal of supporting these programs is to prevent and reduce the spread of COVID-19 in the community and protect those most at risk of unavoidable COVID-19 exposure or severe outcomes.

Due to increasing demand and a global shortage of rapid testing kits, Alberta will be prioritizing the distribution of rapid test kits to health care settings and those that support vulnerable or otherwise unvaccinated populations. Workplaces and settings that do not reflect these criteria are no longer eligible for the program.

Establishing Your Rapid Asymptomatic COVID-19 Screening Program

Organizations are responsible for ensuring protocols and public health rules are being followed, test administrators receive and complete the required training to administer and process the tests and communicate results, and use of the tests is reported to Alberta Health.

Because the tests are administered with nasal swabs, they may be performed by a non-health care provider who has completed the required training (see Resources on [Rapid Testing for Employers and Service Providers](#)). Organizations may also allow people who are being tested to swab themselves, under the supervision of a trained individual who then performs the test and interprets the results.

Organizations must also have processes in place for using personal protective equipment (PPE), recording and reporting screening results, biohazardous waste disposal, and managing individuals who screen as positive, etc.

COVID-19 INFORMATION

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The following rapid tests are currently available from Alberta Health: Abbott Panbio, BD Veritor, BTNX and Roche. Alberta Health will determine which test an organization receives based on site consideration, screening program details, and available inventory.

Organizations are responsible for all costs related to screening programs they initiate. Alberta Health will only provide the rapid tests free of charge. Other considerations for developing a screening program are available on the [Rapid Testing for Employers and Service Providers](#) webpage.

Guidance for rapid asymptomatic COVID-19 screening in Alberta is available on the [Rapid Testing for Employers and Service Providers](#) webpage. For specific guidance on employer-initiated rapid testing in the workplace, please review the following [guidelines](#).

Requesting Rapid Tests

Rapid tests can be requested from the Government of Alberta by completing a [request for rapid tests form](#) online, which outlines the details of a proposed screening program. To assist Alberta Health in determining an organization's eligibility to receive free tests, general information and specific details of the screening program are required to ensure alignment with public health requirements.

Applications will be reviewed by Alberta Health, which will evaluate submissions for adherence to public health guidelines and screening best practices. Successful applicants will be required to enter into an agreement and report weekly to Alberta Health on use of the tests.

Rapid tests can also be purchased privately; however, all screening programs must align with public health requirements.