

# GUIDANCE FOR AT HOME COVID-19 RAPID ANTIGEN TESTING

## Overview

Rapid antigen tests are the recommended tool for most Albertans to test for COVID-19. They perform best when used for people who have symptoms, to determine if they have COVID-19. It is no longer recommended to use a rapid antigen test on someone who does not have any symptoms of respiratory illness. This document outlines the recommended swabbing process for a rapid antigen test and what to do depending on the results. This document and the guidance within it is subject to change and will be updated as needed.

Emerging evidence indicates that taking a sample by swabbing an individual's mouth, throat and nose is a more effective for detecting COVID-19 when using a rapid antigen test. For more information, please see the instructional video on how to swab an individual's mouth, throat and nose produced by the Ontario COVID-19 Science Advisory Table, available on YouTube at: [youtube.com/watch?v=LJhdIWWdXT4](https://youtube.com/watch?v=LJhdIWWdXT4)

Note that if only one site is sampled, it should be the nose, as sampling the mouth or throat alone has not been shown to be as sensitive as the nose alone in Canadian studies.

## How to swab your mouth and nose

1. Don't eat, drink, or take oral medication for 30 minutes prior to collecting the sample.
2. Wash your hands.
3. Remove the swab from wrapper and grasp handle.
4. Insert the swab into your mouth and rub the inside of each cheek, between the cheek and gums, rotating the swab for 5 seconds.
5. Gently rub the back of your throat or tongue in a circular fashion for 5 seconds.
6. With the same swab, insert into the front of one nostril and gently wipe around the inside of your nose 3-5 times.
7. Repeat in the other nostril.
8. Follow the manufacturer's instructions on how to process the sample.

Parents and guardians of children who are under the age of 2 years of age can swab the cheeks, back of the mouth and nostrils of the child as explained above, for the purposes of administering a rapid test at home.

If you are symptomatic (e.g., fever, cough, shortness of breath, runny nose, sore throat or loss of sense of taste or smell), you should isolate until symptoms resolve, you feel well enough to return to regular

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activities and once fever has been resolved for 24 hours whether you have a positive or negative test result. The Respiratory Illness assessment tool can be used to determine what type of care is needed based on your symptoms and how to manage mild symptoms at home: [ahs.ca/covidscreen](https://ahs.ca/covidscreen).

People at greater risk from COVID-19 may be eligible for medical treatments. Since the available treatments should be administered within 3-5 days of when symptoms start, it is very important that you use the assessment tool as soon as you start to experience symptoms.

## Recommended next steps after receiving a rapid antigen test result

People who test positive for COVID-19, or who have COVID-19 symptoms not related to a pre-existing condition, should isolate at home.

### Positive rapid test



#### With symptoms

##### You Should Isolate at Home

Stay home until:

- Your symptoms resolve or improve,
- You feel well enough to return to regular activities, and,
- You have been without a fever for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications.

It is recommended that you wear a mask in indoor settings for a total of 10 days from when your symptoms started, especially when around individuals who are high risk (for example, when visiting a continuing care facility or hospital).

### Negative rapid test



#### With symptoms

##### You Should Isolate at Home

Take second rapid test in 24 hours:

Regardless of whether you are positive or negative for COVID-19 you should stay home until:

- Your symptoms resolve or improve,
- You feel well enough to return to regular activities, and
- You have been without a fever for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications.

It is recommended that you wear a mask in indoor settings for a total of 10 days from when your symptoms started, especially when around individuals who are high risk (for example, when visiting a continuing care facility or hospital).

Note that for individuals at high risk of severe outcomes who have symptoms, it is also possible to access PCR testing through your primary care provider without waiting for 24 hours to take a second rapid test.

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## No symptoms

### You Should Isolate at Home

If your first test is positive, take second rapid test 24 hours later. If the second result is positive:

- Monitor yourself closely for symptoms. If you develop symptoms follow guidance above.
- Avoid contact with anyone who might be at high risk of severe outcomes.
- It is recommended you wear a mask in indoor settings with others for 10 days from the date of the first positive test.

If the result of the second test is negative, you do not need to stay home as long as you do not develop symptoms.

## No symptoms

### Isolation is not required.

A negative result does not rule out infection.