



Key Messages and Frequently Asked Questions

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Test to Protect General Key Messages

- Saskatchewan has created a strategy to expand rapid antigen testing for COVID-19 in asymptomatic individuals in a variety of settings across the province. We are using rapid antigen testing as a screening test; to sort people without symptoms who probably are not infected, from those who need to be further investigated. An antigen test detects viral molecules and can produce results in approximately 15 minutes.
- With more contagious variants showing up in more areas across our province, it is more important than ever to expand our testing options and capacity in order to limit the spread of these highly contagious viruses. Because variant strains are more transmissible, receiving point-of-care testing can detect COVID-19 to protect individuals and stop the spread to others.
- Testing is an important element of a multi-layered approach that will usher us through the pandemic when used along with all the other lines of defense; using proper personal protective equipment (PPE), limiting gatherings, keeping 2 metres away from others outside your immediate household, wearing a mask, washing your hands often, staying home if you are unwell and getting vaccinated when it's available to you.
- Testing is voluntary, but by everyone being informed of their status they can protect themselves and those around them and help maintain a safe workplace and home environment. It's important for everyone to be tested and tested regularly.
- The *Test to Protect* Program is a COVID-19 screening tool (not used to diagnose) for staff, and in approved cases, client populations, through the use of a nasal swab and rapid test which provides a result in roughly 15 minutes.
- If you are symptomatic, get tested for COVID-19 immediately at an SHA testing center or drive-thru testing option if available in your area. Anyone experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, even if they are mild or if they have been told that they are a close contact, must immediately self-isolate at home and should be tested immediately, **even if they have been vaccinated**. Anyone who receives a negative test result but continues to experience COVID-19 symptoms should be retested.
- To support the expansion of point-of-care specimen collection and testing, the Ministry of Health has amended the *Medical Laboratory Licensing Regulations* to exempt agencies, facility/organization and industry partners from requiring a laboratory license to deliver these safe and simple tests.
- There are currently two ways the SHA is offering the *Test to Protect* program, **Community Intake** for any community agency business, clinic or industry testing employees, clients, students or residents and the **Health Care Worker Intake** for any SHA or Affiliate Health Care Worker employee.

Test to Protect General Questions and Answers

- **Q: What is the required PPE for the staff members who will be administering the tests?**
- A: Medical grade nitrile gloves, a face mask and goggles or face shield are recommended to conduct rapid antigen testing
- **Q: Will I test positive on an antigen test if I've been vaccinated? Will I receive false positive results if I've**



been vaccinated?

- A: No, antigen tests will not be affected by whether a person is vaccinated or not; they will not see false positive results.
- **Q: How well do these tests perform?**
- Antigen point of care tests are good at detecting people who are shedding moderate to high levels of virus. If an antigen test is positive, it is very likely the person has COVID-19 (specificity >99%).
- Antigen point of care tests are not as good as in-lab tests at detecting infections though, and may be negative even if a person is infected. If an antigen test is negative, it does not rule out COVID-19 (sensitivity 50-90%, depending on level of virus shedding).
- **Q: What if I've been diagnosed with COVID-19 previously?**
- If you have previously tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 90 days, you should not be retested with antigen point of care tests.
- **Q: What do I do with my testing waste?**
- A: The manufacturer does not require biohazard waste disposal for the testing waste. While this means you can throw the testing waste in your standard garbage receptacle, if you have a biohazard waste disposal process, we encourage you to use that.
- **Q. Can tests be done on people who are ill or who do not have any symptoms?**
- A. Anyone with symptoms is directed to get a COVID test done at their closest testing site or drive-thru testing site which will be sent for an in-laboratory polymerase chain reaction (PCR) analysis. A PCR test is required to confirm or diagnose COVID-19. The point-of-care rapid tests should only be performed on asymptomatic persons.

Test to Protect Community (Businesses, Agencies and Organizations) Testing Program Key Messages

- The COVID-19 – *Test to Protect* (Community Rapid Antigen Test) Program is aimed at supporting community-based services (businesses, agencies and organizations) in sustaining healthy workplaces through the early detection of COVID-19 and the prevention of outbreaks. .
- Along with appropriate training, rapid antigen testing will be offered to all organizations, agencies and businesses in a phased approach to test asymptomatic individuals.
- Businesses and agencies are encouraged to apply to the program and will be on-boarded in priority sequence or on a first come first served basis through a self-delivered program.
- There are currently two types of antigen testing being used for this *Test to Protect* program, Abbott PanBio



Nasal Tests and BD Veritor Nasal Tests.

- Both tests are easy to use, include a painless nasal swab, test for the COVID-19 antigen (protein) and provide a result in roughly 15 minutes.
- Both tests are approved for screening, but people who test positive require a confirmatory test (PCR – Polymerase Chain Reaction). A PCR test is analyzed by a lab and anyone can call HealthLine 811 for help arranging a PCR test.
- Interest in the program continues to grow with agencies, businesses and health care workers alike.
- The SHA testing team is continually working to increase efficiencies, build partnerships in order to expanding antigen testing across the province.

Test to Protect Community (Businesses, Agencies and Organizations) Testing Program

Questions and Answers

General Information and Intake Process

Q: How does a non-SHA facility/organization get information to participate in providing this testing in their location?

A: Interested agencies and facility/organizations can learn more about the program and what is involved [here](#) where you will find a step-by-step process for intake including access to the intake form.

Q: What kinds of costs are associated with this?

A: While there is no initial fee for the program (supplies or shipping) there will be costs in terms of human resources, training time and personal protective equipment (PPE).

Q: If we implement these tests, can we change or increase the numbers of visitors we have, etc.?

A: The program is to be utilized for sorting, identifying those who may be symptom free but require further investigation. Anyone who implements a testing program will still have to follow Public Health Orders and guidelines when it comes to visitor restrictions, capacity, etc.

Q: Do you have protocols for how a facility/organization should be using the tests for allowing visits? I.e. How many family members should be in the building at a time, how long the visits should be, etc?

A: All agencies and facility/organizations are advised to continue to follow all recommended COVID-19 guidelines for visitation. Please keep in mind that these rapid antigen tests are a screening test that needs to be used alongside other screening measures (ie. screening questionnaire, temperature monitoring, masking), and not as a stand-alone measure.



Q. What is the recommendation for antigen testing in businesses, agencies or organizations where all/most of our staff/clients/etc. have been vaccinated?

A: Currently the recommendations for antigen testing are the same whether an individual has been vaccinated or not. Vaccination will not interfere with antigen testing. Vaccines do not prevent all infections, and while we know vaccines are very good at preventing severe disease, we do not know how well they prevent asymptomatic shedding of infectious virus. This is currently being studied, and that evidence is reviewed as it becomes available. As we learn more, these recommendations may change.

Q. What payment options are available for individuals who are required to self-isolate based on a positive test?

A: If you or your employer doesn't already have access to specific policies to support leave due to COVID-19, please visit the [Government of Canada website](https://www150.ca/gov/en/index.html) for more information about payment and federal support programs.

Training

Q. Who can provide these rapid tests?

A: These tests are safe and simple to administer using a nasopharyngeal (NP) or nasal swab. Qualified health providers are still required to have a license to collect a NP swab. Nasal swab collection has now been amended to be expanded to non-healthcare professionals who are identified to be trained to ensure compliance and safety.

Q. What kind of training will people receive who are administering the test?

A: Training is currently in place now through online training program. Biweekly Webex meetings are offered for those who require support, for updates in the program or to answer questions.

Q: Is it recommended only one or multiple people at a facility/organization have the training?

A: Each facility/organization can administer their testing as is required for their organization to meet the recommended weekly testing. It is recommended for coverage to have more than one person per facility trained.

Q: Can my employee complete their own nasal swab and pass it to the trained individual to do the test?

A: If an employee is uncomfortable with another employee taking their nasal swab the trained employee can over see the other employee take their own nasal swab. The employee is provided a kit upon entry to the screening area. The employee self-administers a nasal swab following the procedure below. The trained employee is present to answer any questions and support if needed.

Q: Do we need to send in our completed training certificate for each individual trained in our agency?

A: No. It is your agency's responsibility to ensure your testers have completed the training, which will allow them to perform the required tasks.



Q: Do you have protocols for how a business, agency or organization might be able to use the tests to expand their business or services.

A: Antigen testing is just one of several screening tools recommended for businesses, agencies or organizations to help prevent COVID-19 outbreaks. Tests are not to be utilized to expand business opportunities. All Public Health Orders, as they apply to businesses, agencies and organizations, must still be followed.

Q: Does the SHA require us to complete informed consent with all those participating in antigen testing?

A: The facility/organization administering the testing may have such requirements and should ensure they follow any and all legal requirements. The test is voluntary and can not be mandated by the employer. Typically, by presenting for the test, consent is assumed. Results are self-reported to the employer and to HealthLine 811 for a confirmatory test.

Understanding the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

(For Abbott ID Now PCR Tests Only)

Q: How do we initiate the MOU process?

A: When your agency is provided notice that you have been approved to move through the process, you will be contacted by the SHA Testing Team who will provide a customized MOU for your review. This process can occur simultaneously with the education onboarding of your testers. Once your MOU is signed, please return it to the individual who sent it to you to advance your agency through our intake process.

Q: Why do we need a MOU?

A: The Medical Laboratory Licensing Act, 1995 and its Regulations outline the requirements for point-of-care testing in the Province of Saskatchewan. In order for a facility/organization to conduct point-of-care testing for COVID-19 and collect specimens for that purpose, there must be an agreement satisfactory to the Minister between that facility/organization and the Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA). The Agreement must outline the terms and conditions under which point-of-care testing for COVID-19 may occur (education, reporting, data collection, liability and privacy). Facility/organizations approved to conduct point-of-care testing for COVID-19 by will be provided with a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for review. If the terms of the MOU are agreeable to both parties, the MOU will be fully executed. – MOU process no longer exists. Replaced with Registration Checklist when program was deregulated.

Supplies

Q. What type of tests are available and what's included in the supplies?

A. The SHA is currently using two type of rapid antigen tests: Abbott PanBio and BD Veritor. Most typically the Abbot Panbio nasal tests will be issued. Please click [here](#) for a quick reference guide on the Abbott PanBio and [here](#) for an overview of the BD Veritor testing supplies and process. The SHA will work with the approved facilities/organizations to determine which available test will work best for their setting.

**Q: How do we get our supplies?**

A: When your agency is approved to move through the intake process, you will be provided with access to training and a Registration Checklist. At this time, your agency will be shipped an initial two week supply. Both the supplies and shipping are currently free of charge.

Q: What are the procurement channels available for access to appropriate PPE?

A: Medical grade nitrile gloves, a face mask and goggles or face shield are recommended to conduct rapid antigen testing. For information about how to procure additional PPE, please refer to our website page regarding [accessing personal protective equipment](#). In addition to PPE, appropriate cleaning protocols should be in place prior to, between tests and following the testing event.

Q: If tests are free, is there a shipping cost?

A: The testing supplies will be provided at no charge to community sites, at this time shipping costs are covered.

Reporting**Q: How do I report completed tests?**

A: The [SHA0112 Antigen Testing – Daily Log](#) is where you record the details of the people you are testing. Please do not send it to SHA; this list is for internal reference only and to use as your reference when you report your testing information to the webform provided to you in the training kit.

Q. What happens if a rapid test comes back/screens positive?

A. The person who screens or receives a COVID positive result **might** have a COVID-19 infection. That person needs to self-isolate immediately and call HealthLine 811 to arrange a PCR test or drive to the nearest testing site.

A PCR test needs to be processed in a laboratory to confirm a diagnosis of COVID-19. It is very important that the diagnostic test be done for their health as well as to put in safety measures to keep the people around them safe from further spread.

The PCR laboratory test may look different by area of the province and the location where the antigen testing is being performed. Based on location, options for PCR testing may include:

- On site collection of an NP swab may take place if there is a qualified health provider present who is licensed
- Referral to a [testing/drive-thru location](#) in the area
- Referral to call HealthLine 811 to book a test.

Public Health will work with you to understand the results of your positive antigen test and the confirmatory PCR test. A positive PCR test indicates the person is COVID positive. As such, Public Health will provide next steps to



isolation and begin the contact tracing process. This helps us reduce the spreading of this virus to families, friends, and communities.

Q. What happens if a rapid test comes back/screens negative?

A. If a person screens or tests negative, it is important that they:

- Remain watchful for symptoms in themselves (self-monitor); and those they are in contact with.
- If any symptoms develop, it is important that they stay home and call HealthLine 811 to arrange for a PCR test.
- Wash their hands often
- Keep a safe physical distance from others
- Wear a mask when in public spaces
- Continue to get tested-antigen tests can be administered up to 2-3 times a week as a screening tool

Health Care Worker At Home Testing Program Key Messages

- Health care workers (HCW) and facilities are at an increased risk of contracting COVID-19. Regular point-of-care (POC) antigen (rapid) testing has been proven as an effective way to screen for asymptomatic COVID-19.
- The At Home Testing Program gives SHA and Affiliate health care workers the opportunity to participate and to be trained to conduct weekly point-of-care antigen testing on themselves and members of their household.
- The option to take the training and participate in at home testing is completely voluntary, but by knowing their status health care workers can protect themselves and those around them, helping to maintain a safe workplace and home environment. It's important for everyone to be tested and tested regularly.

Health Care Worker At Home Testing Questions and Answers

Q. What is this and how does it differ from the point-of-care testing happening in the community?

A: Health care workers and facilities are at an increased risk of contracting COVID-19. Regular point-of-care (POC) antigen (rapid) testing has been proven as an effective way to screen for asymptomatic COVID-19. The tests are the same in community but what is different for SHA and Affiliate health care workers is that they have the option to participate and to be trained to conduct weekly point-of-care antigen testing on themselves and members of their household.

Q. How do I find more information to determine if I want to participate?

A: As a start, please visit this the [Ministry of Health Testing website](#) where you will find information about the process, how to enroll and links to training and information. If after you have enrolled or at the point of testing you and your household have questions, please contact the OH&S Hotline at 1-833-233-4403.

Q. How do I get trained to do the testing for me and my household?



A: You can register and take the online training by following the instructions outlined in the [Instructions for Accessing Online Training for Healthcare Worker Antigen Testing](#).

Visit the [Testing, Screening, Treatment and Medical Directive page](#) for more information.

Questions about the At-Home Testing Program can be sent to HCWantigentesting@saskhealthauthority.ca but please use the form above to initiate self-serve training.

Q. Once trained, how do I start and where do I get the supplies from? What is my responsibility with these supplies?

A: At the end of the training session, you will be required to confirm that you have completed the modules and understand how to conduct the antigen testing on yourself. You will also be issued a certificate of completion once you have completed all modules and have answered a few simple questions.

Supplies are available at a variety of distribution hubs, please speak to your unit manager to inquire about times with your local station. To acquire your supplies (each supply kit comes in a box sufficient to conduct 25 tests), simply go to your pick-up location, show the staff person the picture or print out of your completion of training and sign your name and show your employee ID (or relevant proof of professional status if you are a non-SHA health care worker) to acquire your box of supplies.

These supplies are limited and are critical to screen for asymptomatic testing in this province. It is therefore very important that the SHA and its employees demonstrate effective stewardship of these supplies. This means:

- The sale or exchange of these supplies is strictly prohibited
- The supplies are sensitive to extreme temperatures, therefore cannot be stored or transported in hot or cold environments (e.g., outside or in your car)

Q. What happens after I get the results from me and my household? What do I do to confirm and how do I screen for work now?

A: If the results of you AND your household member(s) are negative, you can simply declare this as part of your regular return to work screening (a new question about antigen testing has been added to the screening intake).

If the results of you OR your household member(s) is positive you must do the following:

1. **Arrange for a PCR test** - A PCR test is required to confirm a diagnosis of COVID-19. It is very important that the diagnostic test be done for your health as well as to put in safety measure to keep your family safe from further spread. You and/or the household member(s) with the positive antigen test must either go directly to a [drive-thru testing site](#) (if applicable) or call the HealthLine 811, advising them of a positive antigen test and book an appointment as soon as possible with a testing and assessment centre to have a PCR confirmatory test conducted. Once at the testing and assessment centre, please advise the tester that you have a) tested positive for an antigen point-of-care test and b) that you are a health care worker (if this applies).
2. **Self-isolate immediately** - You are required by the law under the Public Health Act to start to self-isolate immediately to stop the spread of COVID-19 to others. We know that this is hard, and can present



difficulties, but it is the best thing you can do to protect the health of your family, friends and community.

3. **Speak with Public Health** - Public Health will contact you shortly after declaring your positive POC antigen test to the test site. In the meantime, it is recommended that you and your household members create a contact tracing list. You must also follow strict self-isolation protocols.
4. **Complete next steps for testing and results** - If your results come back with a positive PCR test, Public Health will support you and your household during this time. If your results come back negative, you/your household member(s) can return to work as usual.

Q. How do SHA employees get paid if they or someone in their house test positive?

While you are waiting for the PCR confirmatory test you are required to self-isolate and during this time you will receive SHA Pandemic paid leave. If you are an SHA employee and you test positive for COVID-19 from the PCR tests, you would then be paid by Pandemic sick pay or WBC after determination of origin (e.g., community transmission or workplace transmission).

If you are an SHA employee and a member of your household is PCR confirmed positive & you are deemed a close contact by OH&S, MHO, HealthLine 811 or Public Health, you are entitled to Pandemic paid leave until your isolation period ends.

Q. How often do I test myself? My household?

A: You may test between 1-3 times per week. The evidence has shown that regular (weekly) testing is a great defense for screening asymptomatic COVID-19 cases. In some cases where there is an area of concern or in the case of an outbreak, more frequent testing may be suggested by Public Health and/or your health care facility.

Q. Should I use this antigen testing on me and my household if one of us are experiencing COVID-19 related symptoms?

A: NO. These antigen tests are not for use when you have COVID-19 symptoms. If you or your household experiences COVID-19 symptoms, please follow the regular process which includes self-isolation and calling the HealthLine 811 to book a PCR laboratory confirmed COVID-19 test. This is the fastest way to confirm your COVID-19 status and to ensure you and your household receives the appropriate supports for when you are presenting with symptoms.

Q. Do I have to do this? Is this mandatory? What if I don't want to test at home?

A: This point-of-care antigen testing for screening is completely voluntary for health care workers.

Q. What happens if I take the training and the tests and then decide I don't want to do this anymore? Can I return the unused tests and opt-out?

A: As this testing program is voluntary, you can stop or restart it at any time. If you no longer wish to continue, we ask that you dispose of your tests. The tests are single use and cannot be returned to the SHA due to risk of contamination.

Q: I'm a physician/dentist/pharmacist and I want to do antigen testing, what do I do?



There are two potential processes for physicians interested in rapid antigen testing:

- Physicians, dentists and pharmacists, who are interested in providing antigen testing for their patients and/or staff through their practice, please contact us at Antigentestingintake@saskhealthauthority.ca.
- Physicians, dentists and pharmacists who work on-site or have access to an SHA or Affiliate Healthcare facilities may be eligible to participate in the at-home testing program for Saskatchewan Health Authority and Affiliates Healthcare Workers. [More information about this program is available](#).

Q. What is the recommendation for antigen testing in facilities/organizations where all/most of our residents/clients/etc. have been vaccinated?

A: Currently the recommendations for antigen testing are the same whether an individual has been vaccinated or not. Vaccines do not prevent all infections, and while we know vaccines are very good at preventing severe disease, we do not know how well they prevent asymptomatic shedding of infectious virus. Vaccination will not interfere with antigen testing. While vaccines prevent the majority (still not 100%) of severe disease, we do not have evidence about how well they prevent asymptomatic infections, which still shed infectious virus. This is currently being studied, and that evidence is reviewed as it becomes available. As we learn more, these recommendations may change.

Test to Protect School Program Key Messages

- Approximately 100,000 antigen tests have been designated for Saskatchewan schools
- The Saskatchewan Health Authority is offering schools the option of developing one of two testing programs for their school:
 - **Self-Delivered Program**
 - Requested by or coordinated with the Ministry of Health
 - Offered to students and staff during or after school
 - Delivered by the school but supported by the SHA
 - Coordinates consent, privacy, reporting and data
 - **Third-Party Testing**
 - Requested by or coordinated with the Ministry of Health
 - Offered outside school hours to staff, students and families
 - Booked by family/student- no consent required
 - Delivered by third party (reporting and data)

Test to Protect School Program Questions and Answers

Q: What is the purpose of using rapid tests in schools?

A: Rapid tests are generally used as a screening tool to identify the presence of COVID-19 in asymptomatic individuals. They may be carried out when there are known cases in the school and/or community. This ensures additional positive cases are quickly identified and isolated.



Rapid testing in schools does not replace community testing. If you are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, or have been in contact with someone who is experiencing symptoms, the Saskatchewan Health Authority recommends getting a referral to a community testing centre or visiting a drive-thru testing site.

Q: How will it be determined which schools get these tests?

A: School divisions and public health officials will evaluate a number of factors in the school and surrounding community to determine when and where to distribute the tests.

Q: What training is provided?

A: Training will be conducted through an online module that has been developed by the Saskatchewan Health Authority Laboratory Medicine Department.

Q: Where can those who want to administer rapid COVID-19 testing in schools sign up for training?

A: Community groups or organizations that are willing to administer rapid tests in schools are encouraged to apply through the Request for Proposal and Quote (RFPQ) that is posted on SaskTenders.ca. (Search keywords “rapid antigen testing”.)

Q: What are the requirements for a student to get a rapid test?

A: The decision will be made based on factors considered by the Medical Health Officer in consultation with the school. The student must have a signed consent form prior to having a test administered. A school may choose to get consent forms pre-authorized, so there is no delay once a decision to perform tests is made.

Q: Will parents be required to provide consent for the test to be administered to their children?

A: Consent is required before a test is performed. If a parent or caregiver does not provide written consent for a minor, no test will be done. This testing is entirely voluntary. Any student 14-years-old or over will be required to sign a consent form in order to obtain testing.

Q: What happens if a student has symptoms?

A: Rapid antigen tests are only appropriate for individuals who have no symptoms of COVID-19. Students with symptoms of COVID-19 will be asked to wear a non-medical mask and self isolate in a separate room until a parent or guardian arrives to take the student home. Areas the student was in contact with will be identified and thoroughly cleaned. The student can return to school after receiving a negative COVID-19 test and/or 48 hours after symptoms resolve.

Q: What happens if a student tests positive or negative?

A: If a student tests positive with the point of care test, they will be asked to wear a non-medical mask and self-isolate in a separate room until a parent or guardian arrives to take the student home.

If a student tests negative, no further action is required.

Q: How much do the tests cost?



A: The tests are free. They were provided to Saskatchewan through the federal allocation, so there is no cost to the province or to schools, teachers or parents.

Q: Are these tests safe?

A: Yes, nasal swabs are minimally invasive. They can be done safely by an individual after they have been trained.

Q: Do point-of-care tests hurt?

A: No, the nasal swab used to perform the test does not hurt. This test is much less uncomfortable than the nasopharyngeal swab that is required for PCR tests. If a student changes their mind about having the test, they are free to opt-out.