

FAQ

What is the difference between a Rapid Antigen Testing (RAT) and a PCR Test?

The Rapid Antigen Test looks for proteins from the COVID-19 virus. Results are available in about 15 to 20 minutes, at the same site the sample is taken. This test may be useful for repeated screening of asymptomatic people in high-risk settings, such as healthcare workers. Antigen tests are not as accurate as PCR tests.

PCR (also known as polymerase chain reaction) tests show if someone currently has COVID-19. Swabs have to be shipped to one of more than 40 laboratories across Ontario in order to be analyzed. In a lab, technicians can process and analyze about 96 of these tests per machine in 4 to 6 hours. Shown to be highly accurate, the PCR lab test is the gold-standard of COVID-19 testing.

[Click here](#) for more info.

How do I use a RAT kit?

Watch Dr. Marek Smeija, Infectious Disease Physician and Medical Co-director of Infection Prevention and Control at SJHH, demonstrate how to take a COVID-19 RAT in this short and easy-to-follow video:

[Click here](#) to watch a demo on how to take a BNTX rapid antigen test.

Where do I upload my result?

There is no requirement to upload tests results for this testing.

If no one is verifying results, why do I need to do this testing?

With the rapid spread of Omicron in our community and among healthcare workers, this is an additional safety measure recommended by the Ministry of Health to identify pre-symptomatic or asymptomatic cases earlier. The RAT screening is part of a bundle of HCW safety measures to keep patients and fellow HCWs safe. These safety measures include:

- PPE (level 3 masks/N95s in certain areas/procedures)
- Passive Self-screening before every shift
- Self-swabbing, PCR and RATs on outbreak and high alert units as well as those who are in contact tracing protocol

If I have a positive RAT test, what do I do?

If the RAT is positive:

- Do not come into work
- Call the COVID hotline – ext. 36131
- Tell your manager
- Arrange for a PCR test as soon as possible at one of the following HCW testing locations:
 - Medical Out-Patient Clinic 100 West 5th
 - www.Hamiltoncovidtest.ca
 - 289-778-1465

If RAT and PCR is positive:

- Inform manager immediately and call COVID hotline ext. 36131.
- For both symptomatic and asymptomatic, if the first PCR is negative, the PCR should be repeated in 24 hours. Two negative PCRs are required to return to work following a positive RAT.

If my unit is in high alert or outbreak, what process should I follow?

Units in outbreaks will follow instructions of Infection Prevention and Control, and do daily Rapid Antigen Testing, and reporting procedures as instructed by IPAC.

Unless directed otherwise by IPAC, HCWs working on units in outbreak and high alert should do daily Rapid Antigen Testing for 10 days prior to each shift until day 11.