



## **Rapid Antigen Testing Program Information Sheet**

Updated February 1, 2022

### **What Is the Provincial Antigen Screening Program (PASP)?**

The Provincial Antigen Screening Program is a provincial program that allows employers in priority settings (long-term care homes, retirement homes, congregate living settings, schools, etc.) to add an additional safety measure in high-risk and essential workplaces, to help reduce the spread of COVID-19. Rapid antigen tests (RAT) are provided free of charge to support organizations in priority settings, to enhance existing screening and testing measures for asymptomatic employees and other identified groups. SSHA is participating in this program, in partnership with Toronto Public Health (TPH), as rapid antigen tests allow for shelter settings to identify cases of COVID-19 that may have otherwise been missed.

Updated provincial guidance, [COVID-19 Integrated Testing & Case, Contact and Outbreak Management Interim Guidance: Omicron Surge](#), allows RATs to be used to confirm COVID-19 diagnosis for symptomatic people and asymptomatic people.

### **What is a Rapid Antigen Test (RAT)?**

A RAT (also known as a point-of-care test) can be performed anywhere and does not require shipping a specimen to a lab for processing. It is currently administered through a nasopharyngeal, nasal, deep nasal, or combined nasal and throat swabs and takes approximately 15 minutes to yield results. Deep nasal swabs can be self-administered under the supervision of a trained staff. Nasopharyngeal swabs will only be performed by trained medical staff.

### **What Are The Benefits of Participating In The Program?**

Available evidence indicates that frequent screening with rapid antigen tests increases the chances of early identification of cases in otherwise asymptomatic individuals. It may therefore help prevent asymptomatic individuals from unknowingly transmitting the virus to other individuals in the workplace.

A key benefit of participating in the Provincial Antigen Screening Program is that rapid, on-site testing may facilitate the identification of an individual infected with COVID-19 that regular screening protocols might otherwise miss. It may therefore help prevent asymptomatic individuals from unknowingly spreading COVID-19 in shelter settings and helps to break the chain of transmission for COVID-19. Access to RAT in homelessness services settings also provides immediate access to COVID-19 testing materials for symptomatic people.

## **Who Can Participate in Rapid Antigen Testing?**

Staff and clients can participate in the RAT program.

## **What Training is Available for Staff?**

[Training materials](#) are available from Ontario Health in an online format and includes a suite of written materials and pre-recorded training modules. Reviewing training materials will help build confidence and competence for those performing the testing and will assist your workplace in understanding program logistics and planning for implementation. Completing the training is required before sites begin rapid testing.

## **Should Individuals Who Have Been Vaccinated for COVID-19 Receive a Rapid Antigen Test?**

Individuals who have received a COVID-19 vaccine are able to receive an accurate result from a rapid antigen test. Vaccinated individuals should not be excluded from rapid antigen testing initiatives.

## **Can Rapid Antigen Tests Detect COVID-19 Variants of Concern?**

It is believed that rapid antigen tests are able to detect COVID-19 caused by a Variant of Concern, however, a rapid antigen test cannot tell if a COVID-19 infection has been caused by a Variant of Concern.

## **What if I Have A Positive Result?**

A positive result on a rapid antigen test is considered a positive test result. Individuals with COVID-19 are required to isolate in accordance with [Public Health guidance](#).

As with all COVID-19 testing, there is the possibility of a false negative. Individuals should continue to follow infection prevention and control measures, including wearing all required PPE and maintaining physical distancing.