Rapid Antigen Test Explainer

FINAL 11-01-22

This is information about rapid antigen tests sometimes called RATs.

What are rapid antigen tests?
Rapid antigen tests are tests you can do yourself at home to check if you have COVID-19.

Most tests take 15 to 30 minutes.

There are two types of tests:

Saliva tests which test saliva (spit); and nasal tests where you need to take a sample from both your nostrils.

Both tests are good at finding COVID-19.

Rapid antigen tests tell you if you are *likely* to have COVID-19.

Rapid antigen tests are faster but less accurate than a standard PCR test that you get at a COVID-19 testing site.

When to use a Rapid Antigen Test?
You should use a rapid antigen Test:

  If you have COVID symptoms.

  If you are a household, social, work or education contact of a positive case and develop symptoms.

  If you are a household contact you must do a test on the first and sixth day from when you started your self-quarantine.

  If you want to quickly check if you may have COVID for example before a social gathering or visiting someone sick or elderly.

  If your school or work requires you to use them as part of regular screening for COVID.

  If you have been told to get a rapid antigen test by the Department of Health or another medical professional.

When should I get a standard PCR test?
You should get a standard PCR test from a testing site:

  If you CANNOT access a rapid antigen test.

  If you have no symptoms, are not a contact but tested positive on a rapid antigen test.

If you have been told to get a PCR test by the Department of Health or another medical professional.

What should do I do if I test positive on a Rapid Antigen Test?
If you test positive on a rapid antigen test you are a *probable case*, this means you are very likely to have COVID-19.

People who are probable cases must follow the same rules as people who have received a positive PCR test.

You must isolate immediately for 7 days and tell people you have been in contact with recently.

Anyone who lives with a probable case will also have to isolate for 7 days.

If you test positive on a rapid antigen test you must tell the Department of Health.

You can report over the phone on 1800 675 398. Press zero (0) if you need an interpreter.

Online at www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/report

Or through your Services Victoria app

You will need to answer some short questions so the Department can make sure you get the right help and support while you are isolating.

This includes help with medical care, food and financial relief if you need it.

Anyone who tests positive for COVID-19 can get the same support, no matter what kind of test they used.

What should I do if I test negative on a Rapid Antigen Test?

If you get a negative result on an Rapid Antigen Test it is less likely you have COVID-19.

Monitor your symptoms and go about your day in a COVIDSafe way.

If you do not have symptoms but are still concerned, then you can use rapid antigen tests again over a few days.

What should I do if I get an unclear result on a rapid antigen test?
If your test does not show a clear negative or positive result it is invalid.

You may not have used it correctly, or there may have been a defect with the test you used.

You will need to do another rapid antigen test.

If you have two invalid results on rapid antigen tests you should get a PCR test and isolate until you receive a negative result.

How do I use rapid antigen tests?
Before you use the test wash your hands and have a phone or clock nearby for timing

If you are using a saliva test do not eat or drink 30 minutes before doing the test.

Follow the instructions that come with the test – your test should have a QR code you can use to watch a video showing how to use it.

It takes around 15-30 minutes to get your result.

Check your results as soon as the time is up according to your test instructions.

Can children use Rapid Antigen Tests?
It is safe to use Rapid Antigen Tests for children.

Children under 12 years old will need a parent or guardian to perform the test on them.

Children over 12 years old can do the test themselves if they want, with a parent or guardian supervising them.

Where can I get a Rapid Antigen Test and how much do they cost?
Rapid antigen tests are available from some supermarkets, pharmacies, or online.

Most test kits cost between $10-$15, depending on where you buy them.

People with concession and low-income cards will be able to get some free rapid antigen tests from pharmacies.

This depends on supply, so it is best to call your local pharmacy to see if they have enough in stock.

Household contacts may also be able to get rapid antigen tests from some testing centres.

If rapid antigen tests are not accessible and you are a contact, go to www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/checklist-contacts to see if you should get a PCR test or monitor for symptoms.

For more information about rapid antigen tests go to: www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/rapid-antigen-tests

This information is produced by the National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters Council.