

RAPID TESTS:

When Your Business Should Use Them

This document was created specifically for businesses in partnership between the Toronto Region Board of Trade and the Ontario COVID-19 Science Advisory Table, as a compliment to the Science Advisory Table's [“Use of Rapid Antigen Tests during the Omicron Wave”](#) brief.

Testing asymptomatic individuals can:

Prevent office-wide isolation when a new case is detected.



The Advisory Table calls this approach “test to stay,” where anyone who had contact with someone who is symptomatic and/or tested positive is rapid-tested daily for a period of risk (i.e. 7 days after contact with the person who tested positive).

- a. If employees continue to have no symptoms and produce daily negative results, they can remain on-site rather than isolating at home, provided that they properly mask and practice physical distancing whenever possible.

On a voluntary basis, identify asymptomatic cases in moderate-risk settings.



You can offer regular voluntary testing of asymptomatic individuals to find cases in moderate-risk settings, such as schools and workplaces. In order to meaningfully reduce transmission, asymptomatic individuals should be rapid tested 3-5 times per week.

Testing symptomatic individuals can:

Confirm COVID-19 in the case of symptoms.



If someone is symptomatic they are presumed to have COVID-19 and must isolate as soon as possible regardless of rapid test results. If a rapid test is done and is positive it should be treated as diagnostic for COVID-19. Additional confirmation by PCR is not necessary.

- a. Fully vaccinated employees may return to work after 5 days isolation without further testing as long as symptoms have been improving and no fever is present for at least 24 hours, provided that they properly mask and practice physical distancing whenever possible.

Help rule out COVID-19 in the case of symptoms.



If a rapid test is available to a symptomatic person, it may be used to assess the likelihood that symptoms are related to COVID-19. A single negative rapid test in an individual with COVID-19 symptoms does not mean that they do not have COVID-19 infection. If two consecutive rapid tests, separated by 24-48 hours, are both negative, the symptomatic individual is less likely to have COVID-19 infection. They should self-isolate until they have no fever, and symptoms are improving for at least 24 hours or 48 hours if gastrointestinal symptoms (issues relating to the esophagus, stomach or intestines).

- a. Household members of the symptomatic individual with two negative tests may also discontinue self-isolation, as long as they are asymptomatic.


Where can I get rapid tests for my business?

Businesses with more than 150 employees may be eligible to get free rapid tests through the [Provincial Antigen Screening Program](#), offered through the Government of Ontario.

Businesses with 150 or fewer employees may be eligible to get free rapid tests through a [Workplace Self Screening Kits](#) program offered through the Toronto Region Board of Trade and the City of Toronto, if supply is available.

This document was created under [We're Ready Toronto](#) – a campaign to revitalize downtown Toronto by facilitating a safe, sustainable return of workers and visitors.

As a partnership between city, health and business leaders, We're Ready Toronto was convened by the Toronto Region Board of Trade to support business through the pandemic and mitigate the economic impact of COVID-19.

WE'RE READY TORONTO 

In Ontario, the more transmissible Omicron variant has become the dominant virus causing COVID-19.

For the latest updates and recommendations on effectively using rapid tests, please visit the [Ontario COVID-19 Science Advisory Table website](#).



What are rapid tests?

Rapid antigen tests identify the virus that causes COVID-19 in the nose or throat by detecting proteins attached to the surface of the virus (the “antigen”). These tests produce immediate results.

This makes rapid tests different than Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) tests, which determine whether someone is infected by amplifying the virus’ genetic material at a lab.

The current guidance is that a positive rapid test should be immediately followed by isolation. Additional confirmation by PCR is not necessary.

Don’t vaccination policies or symptom screening offer enough protection?

Vaccination continues to be the best form of protection against severe outcomes of COVID-19. However, two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine no longer offer sufficient protection against infection or transmission. A third dose is recommended to improve protection.

The Omicron variant is most transmissible in the earliest days of infection prior to developing symptoms. Offering rapid tests could provide an additional layer of protection, but new data suggests the performance of rapid tests may not be as good with Omicron as compared to previous variants. Swabbing the inside of the cheek and the back of the tongue or throat, as well as the nose, [demonstrated here](#), as opposed to just the nose likely increases the sensitivity of rapid tests in detecting Omicron.

