

# Rapid antigen testing

## Guide for Businesses



December 2021

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December 2021

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**  
please visit [www.health.govt.nz](http://www.health.govt.nz)

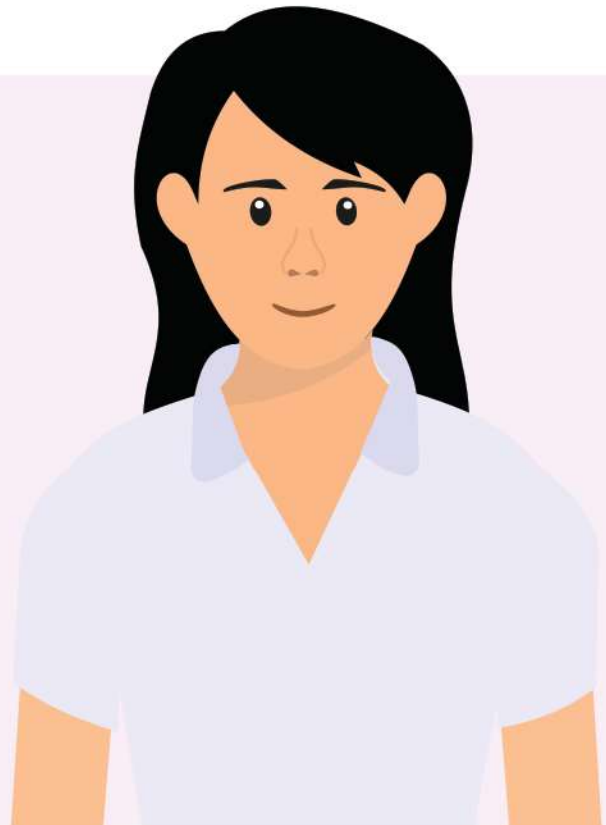
## Introduction

The shift to the COVID-19 Protection Framework allows businesses to open and operate close to normal and enables businesses to take control and manage COVID-19 in their workplace. This supports our overall goal to keep individuals and our communities safe.

This enables businesses to take responsibility for providing protection from COVID-19 in their workplace, and the following guide provides some key information on how Rapid Antigen Tests can be another tool added to your 'COVID-19 Toolbox'.

RATs is a choice for you as a business. It is not mandatory. You can decide if it will work for your business. COVID-19 testing will continue to be available for those who are symptomatic at local community testing centres (CTCs) and General Practices at no cost.

### Supervised testing



## What are Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs)?

### What is Rapid Antigen testing?

Rapid Antigen Tests are another tool to support you, your employees and your workplace to overcome COVID-19.

The use of rapid tests can help reduce the spread of COVID-19 by identifying individuals early before they spread the virus to their colleagues and in the community.

Rapid antigen tests are best used as a surveillance tool as part of a series of tests. We would advise individuals who have COVID-19 symptoms to seek a test via their local GP or CTC.

# COVID-19

## Rapid Antigen Testing Guide

Most rapid antigen testing kits follow these principles, but may differ slightly so please be sure to follow the instructions provided by kit provider.

### Collecting your sample



1 Remove a nasal swab from the pouch.



2 Insert the swab into one of your nostrils up to 2-3cm from the edge of the nostril.



3 Slowly roll the swab 5 times over the surface of the nostril. Using the same swab, repeat this collection process in the other nostril.



4 Check the kit box instructions to confirm the correct timeframe to read your result. This may vary depending on the kit.

### Testing your sample



1 Peel off aluminium foil seal from the top of the extraction vial which contains the extraction buffer.



2 Place the swab into the extraction vial. Rotate the swab vigorously at least 5 times.



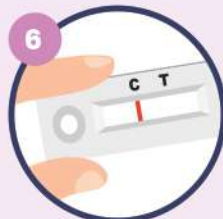
3 Remove the swab by rotating the swab against the vial, while squeezing the sides to release the liquid from the swab.



4 Close the vial with the provided cap and push firmly onto the vial. Mix thoroughly by flicking the bottom of the tube.



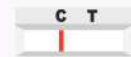
5 Turn vial upside down and hold sample over sample well. Squeeze vial gently. Allow the required drops according to the kit instructions, to fall into the sample well.



6 After 10 minutes read and interpret the test result. The test result should not be read and interpreted after 15 minutes.

#### READ YOUR RESULT

**Negative**  
One line next to the C indicates the test is negative.



**Positive**  
Two lines, one next to C and one next to T, even faint lines indicate the test is positive.



**Invalid result**  
No line next to C indicates the test is invalid.



**TO FIND OUT MORE**  
please visit [www.health.govt.nz](http://www.health.govt.nz)

New Zealand Government



Please be sure to read the instructions provided with the kits to ensure you're taking the right steps and reading your test result within the correct timeframe.

## Key information

### What happens if my rapid antigen test result is invalid?

- If your kit allows it, take a new unused test.
- If unable to or your second test is invalid, contact Healthline and follow their advice.

### What happens if my rapid antigen test result is positive?

If the result of your rapid antigen test is positive, you must:

- Self-isolate at your place of accommodation
- Go for a COVID-19 swab test to confirm the result as soon as possible – visit [www.healthpoint.co.nz/covid-19](http://www.healthpoint.co.nz/covid-19) to find the closest testing provider
- Follow all COVID-19 public health measures
- Contact Healthline for any COVID-19 health advice on **0800 358 5453**

**TO FIND OUT MORE**  
please visit [www.health.govt.nz](http://www.health.govt.nz)

New Zealand Government



Please be sure to read the instructions provided with the kits to ensure you're taking the right steps and reading your test result within the correct timeframe.

## What are the benefits?

- RATs are able to provide a test result in a short amount of time
- The test itself can be self-administered – noting that a supervised test is recommended

## Things to know about RATs

- It is a surveillance tool, it is not diagnostic
- If a test is positive, you will have to repeat the test and if it still positive, undertake a PCR test
- This may have an impact on day-to-day operations
- It can present both a false negative or a false positive sometimes
- It is best used as a surveillance tool as part of a series of tests
- Businesses will need to fund RATs for surveillance testing in the workplace

## How do I get access to RATs?

Under the COVID-19 Public Health Response 2020 (Point of Care) Order (the Order) a number of rapid antigen test kits and importers have been approved. A list of these can be found [here](#).

Applications for the importation and use of rapid antigen tests can be made via the [Epidemic notice and Orders section](#).

For approved kits and distributors see the [Rapid Antigen Testing page](#).

## Things to do to prepare for RATs in the workplace

There are some key steps we recommend you take when preparing to use RATs in the workplace. These are:

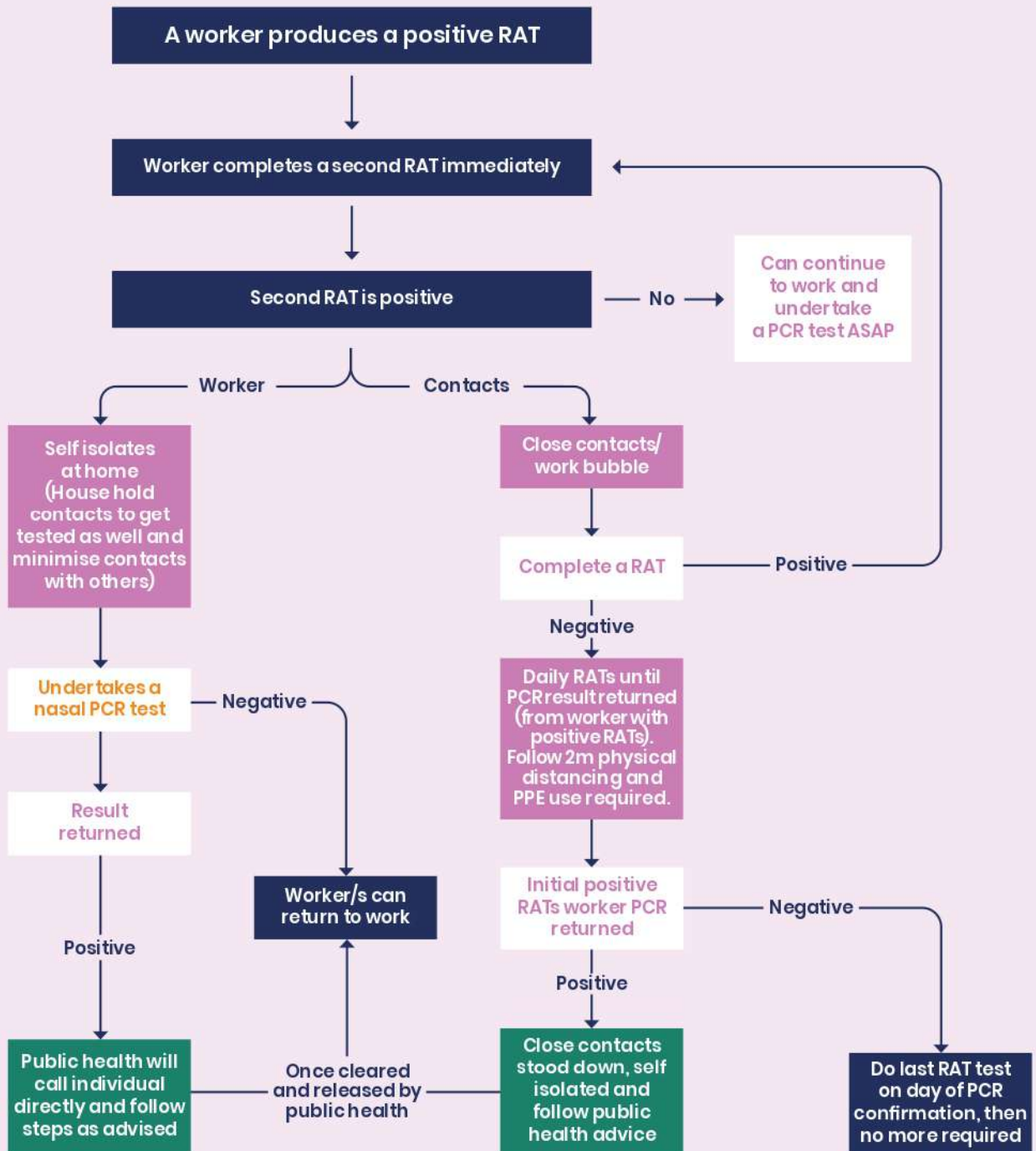
- **Communicate** what is happening and why you're introducing RATs
  - This should include what happens if a positive test occurs
- **Prepare a Standard Operating Procedure** that includes health and safety practice
- **Give it a go** – try a smaller group as a trial run to get a feel for it
  - This helps with the operations/logistics side of the testing
- **Create a site checklist** e.g. where, when, equipment needed
  - This helps on-training and gives people structure and guidance to follow
- **Allocate the necessary resources** in terms of number of supervised testers
  - Do you need to train one person in every bubble to perform the testing?
  - Or train 4-5 across a site?
- **Share the decision tree.** This can help people understand what it means for them as an individual if they have a positive RAT or if they are in a work bubble with someone else who tests positive, so they are well prepared.

## What to do if you get a positive RATs test at work

If a worker is experiencing COVID-19 like symptoms the worker needs to undertake a PCR test and isolate at home until their results are returned.

RATs produce on average 4 false positive results per 1000 tests.

Work surveillance schemes should always confirm positive results with a PCR test and record the number of false positives.



# COVID-19

The following is information related to rapid antigen testing and screening in workplaces. This has been pulled from a wider document that is the Interim Guidance Framework for the Provision of Rapid Antigen Screening for COVID-19 in Clinical and Non-Clinical Settings. This is information as at 29 November. To ensure you're accessing the most up to date information, please be sure to visit the Ministry of Health's website for any updates.

## COVID-19 rapid antigen testing and screening in workplaces

### Information for employers

#### Benefits of rapid testing

Rapid antigen tests are important screening tools to help you protect your employees, customers, their families and the community where they live.

Not everyone who has COVID-19 will show symptoms. Studies suggest that people without symptoms may still cause COVID-19 transmission in a significant number of cases. You can help reduce the risk of outbreaks by regularly testing and screening your employees.

Regular rapid antigen tests provide an extra layer of defence against the spread of the virus, along with COVID-safe behaviours such as frequent handwashing, physical distancing, wearing a mask and vaccination

To ensure more workers have quick and easy access to COVID-19 rapid tests, Ministry of Health is supporting industry partners to provide rapid antigen tests for use as part of workplace screening initiatives. Rapid antigen tests are quick, easy and safe. They provide results in 10 to 15 minutes.

#### Rapid antigen test kit access and conditions

The use of rapid antigen tests as a screening tool is another layer of protection. It's not a substitute for testing requirements set out in legislation or Health Order(s) or other public health measures such as mask wearing, hand hygiene, getting tested if you have any symptoms, physical distancing, proper ventilation and getting the COVID-19 vaccine. Employers can implement rapid antigen testing screening for their workforce. The Ministry of Health has established guidance for workplaces conducting rapid antigen screening. Industry partners who provide rapid antigen testing for workers need to:

- procure authorised rapid antigen test kits as prescribed by the Director General Health
- screen employees according to the guidelines in line with advice from the Ministry of Health
- collect and report on usage if requested by the Ministry of Health



# COVID-19

Industry partners may be requested to provide information collected to help streamline and improve the rapid antigen testing process.

When a person has a standard nasopharyngeal based PCR COVID-19 test, following a detection, indeterminant or invalid rapid antigen test, they must self-isolate (home quarantine) until they receive a negative result or until advised by Public Health.

As the initial pilot progresses, the Ministry of Health may continue to provide guidance to support industry in implementing rapid antigen testing.

## Information for employees

### Why rapid antigen testing is being implemented in your workplace

Your employer has implemented a regular workplace screening initiative to protect you, your family, your colleagues and customers.

Screening employees at least twice a week can help to quickly identify and isolate those who have COVID-19, including those who don't have any symptoms. Early identification helps to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in your workplace and in your community.

Rapid antigen tests detect proteins from the virus that causes COVID-19. They're quick and easy to use. Results are provided in 10 to 15 minutes.

If you've been vaccinated, you should still take part in your workplace screening initiative. The vaccines are safe and effective and can significantly reduce your chance of spreading the virus to those around you.

### How is rapid antigen testing different to other testing

There are two kinds of tests, diagnostic and screening tests.

Rapid antigen tests are a screening test that are used to potentially identify positive cases earlier to help reduce the spread of the virus and prevent outbreaks. When used regularly, rapid antigen tests may help identify individuals who may be infectious early on. Individuals can be pre-symptomatic or asymptomatic but still carry the virus and may transmit it to others.

A standard test such as polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests, is a diagnostic test, and can confirm if someone has COVID-19, with results available in 24 to 48 hours. These tests take a deep nasal sample and throat sample and are tested in laboratories.

A positive rapid antigen test doesn't mean you necessarily have COVID-19, it means you need to get a standard (PCR) test straight away.

# COVID-19

## If I get a positive test result

If you get a positive rapid antigen test result, repeat your test. If your second test is positive, you must immediately get a nasopharyngeal swab and a laboratory PCR test, at a CTC or through your GP, to confirm the result of your screening test.

If your second rapid antigen test is negative, do another rapid antigen test the next day.

Rapid antigen tests will detect most cases of COVID-19 but are not as accurate as a PCR test. Isolate until you get a negative result. Isolating immediately can help break chains of transmission and limit the spread of COVID-19 at your workplace.

## If I get a negative test result

Continue to follow the latest health advice and restrictions in your area. If you develop any symptoms, even if mild, you must immediately get a standard COVID-19 test (nasopharyngeal swab and PCR test) and isolate until you get a negative result.

## If you have symptoms of COVID-19 or are a contact of someone with COVID-19

Do not undertake a rapid antigen test and do not attend the work site. You must immediately get a standard COVID-19 (PCR) test and isolate, including from your household members, and follow the advice given by Ministry of Health. The only way to rule out COVID-19 is to have a PCR test, even if you have only mild symptoms.

## Is personal data collected

Any testing data collected will only be used to help Ministry of Health make public health decisions. None of your personal health data is used without your consent.

# COVID-19

## Question and answers for small businesses on rapid antigen testing

### Requirements following a positive rapid antigen test result

If a rapid antigen test result is positive, immediately repeat the test.

If the second test is positive:

- You must self-isolate away from your workplace
- Book a standard COVID-19 PCR test to confirm the result. Visit [healthpoint.co.nz/covid-19](https://healthpoint.co.nz/covid-19)
- Follow all public health measures
- If the second test is negative, repeat a rapid antigen test the next day.

### ***What happens if a PCR test confirms a positive rapid antigen test result?***

Self-isolate and follow the advice of Public Health. They will also provide guidance on the requirements for testing and isolation for other workers along with family members and contacts of the person who has returned the positive PCR test for COVID-19.

### ***How should staff be managed in the event of a positive RAT result?***

We are currently working on guidance for businesses. This will include details on how to set up processes around staff management so that in the event of a positive RAT result not all staff necessarily need to be stood down.

### Requirements following an invalid rapid antigen test result

If a rapid antigen test is invalid, you can take a second test as per manufacturer's instructions. The most likely reason for an invalid result is the sample was too small or there were not enough drops on the testing strip.

If the second rapid antigen test is invalid or positive:

- You must self-isolate away from your workplace
- Book a standard COVID-19 PCR test to confirm the result. Visit [healthpoint.co.nz/covid-19](https://healthpoint.co.nz/covid-19)
- Follow all public health measures

If invalid results are happening often, further training may be required on how to collect an accurate sample for the rapid antigen testing.

# COVID-19

*What happens if a PCR test is positive after an invalid rapid antigen test result?*

Self-isolate and follow the advice of Public Health. They will also provide guidance on the requirements for testing and isolation for other workers along with family members and contacts of the person who has returned the positive PCR test for COVID-19.

## Requirements following a negative rapid antigen test result

A negative rapid antigen test result does not guarantee you are COVID-19 free. Continue to follow all public health measures and get tested if you are unwell or develop COVID-19 symptoms.

## Disposal requirements

Used rapid antigen test kits are considered medical waste, so need to be disposed of safely. Test and swab disposal will depend on the volume of testing being conducted and whether the kits used for the rapid antigen test returned a positive or negative result.

For PPE, swabs, and kits from negative rapid antigen tests:

- a **biohazard bin** is recommended for large volumes at a single site where rapid antigen testing is being undertaken frequently and on a continuing basis; or
- a **sealed zip lock bag placed in a refuse bin** is suitable for small companies or one-off testing.

If the rapid antigen test was positive, the swab and kit should be put in a zip lock bag and disposed of with normal rubbish.

## PPE (Personal protection equipment) requirements

PPE requirements will vary depending on the rapid antigen test kit being used. Please follow the recommendations provided by the supplier of the kit.

As a minimum, a mask and gloves should be worn when administering a rapid antigen test. This also applies to a support person overseeing testing.

## Other general questions

### ***Can we use rapid antigen testing kits that use saliva as the sample for the test?***

Currently no rapid antigen tests that use a saliva as a sample for the test have been approved for supply and use in New Zealand.

There are three rapid antigen tests authorised for import and supply under the COVID-19 Public Health Response 2020 (Point of Care) Order and approved by the Ministry of Health for use in New Zealand in specific settings.

These tests all use a front of the nose nasal swab to collect the sample for the rapid antigen test.

# COVID-19

***Do we need to record the batch number/lot number against each test conducted?***

The batch/lot number does not need to be recorded against each test. However, record keeping for when a batch/lot is opened and used should be in place.

***Is there a "Ministry of Health's Collection Management System (CMS)" where we need to register participating employees?***

The Ministry of Health does not have a register for participating employees.

**We appreciate** all that you do to keep our communities safe and COVID-19 out.

To find out more please visit the Ministry of Health website.



December 2021

Please email [covid-19poc@health.govt.nz](mailto:covid-19poc@health.govt.nz) if you have any questions or want to find out your eligibility for rapid antigen testing.