

At-Home COVID-19 Rapid Point of Care Test Screening Program - FAQ

If you have been advised by Public Health to isolate, you must do so regardless of vaccination status even if you have tested negative at home with a Rapid POCT COVID-19 screening test.

1 What is an at-home COVID-19 rapid point of care test (POCT)?

- A rapid POCT is an antigen test to screen for COVID-19 that can be done at home by someone who is not a healthcare professional. Within 15 minutes, it can help to identify if a person's sample contains COVID-19.
- While rapid POCT is easy to use and gives results rapidly, it is not as accurate as traditional lab-based PCR testing used to diagnose COVID-19. Only a COVID-19 PCR test is considered a diagnostic test.

2 Why is at-home rapid POCT being offered?

- Rapid POCT screening is another tool to help identify people who may have COVID-19. This will help to limit transmission in the community.
- With the presence of rapidly transmitting variants of concern in New Brunswick, it is important to identify people rapidly to stop further outbreaks.
- It should not replace public health measures such as vaccination, symptom screening, physical distancing, masking, and hand hygiene.

3 Who should have an at-home COVID-19 rapid POCT?

- Individuals who have no symptoms of COVID-19 (are asymptomatic).
- Individuals who have not been notified by Public Health that they are a close contact of a confirmed case.

4 Who should NOT have an at-home COVID-19 rapid test?

- Individuals who have symptoms.
- Individuals who have been contacted by Public Health in relation to an exposure to COVID-19.
- Individuals who have had a lab-confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19 in the past 90 days, because they will continue to test positive even though they are no longer infectious.

5 How is POCT different from a conventional lab-based PCR test?

- A lab-based PCR test is the gold standard molecular-based test to diagnose COVID-19. It is highly accurate for both asymptomatic and symptomatic people. PCR tests are processed in a lab with results available in about 48-72 hours.
- A rapid POCT is faster and can be performed by anyone over the age of 14, but it is not as accurate as PCR testing. Due to the slightly lower accuracy, it is also only for use when people have no symptoms (asymptomatic). POCT should not be used to rule out COVID-19 when symptoms are present.

6 How do I perform an at-home rapid test?

- Instructions on how to perform the at-home test are provided with the kits.
- It is best to perform the test every 2 days.

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7 What should I do if my test is negative?

- A negative result on a rapid test is not a guarantee. You could still develop or be exposed to COVID-19 in the coming days. Continue to test every other day with the remaining tests.
- Continue to protect yourself and others by continuing to follow Public Health guidelines.
- Do not interpret a negative result as permission to attend larger gatherings with friends and family. Follow Public Health guidelines on gathering limits.

8 What should I do if my COVID-19 rapid test is negative, but I develop symptoms of COVID-19?

- If you are unvaccinated and develop symptoms of COVID-19, you are required to isolate and book a diagnostic PCR test at an Assessment Centre using the online referral form.
- If you are fully vaccinated, you should also book a diagnostic PCR test at an Assessment Centre using the online referral form. However, you do not need to isolate while waiting for your test results.
- Please note: if you have been advised by Public Health to isolate, you must do so regardless of vaccination status.
- Once you have your test completed at the Assessment Centre, you will be able to obtain your result in myHealthNB after 48 hours. It may take longer, depending upon test volumes.

9 What should I do if I receive a positive result from my at-home COVID-19 rapid test?

- Everyone, including those who are fully vaccinated, who receives a positive result from an at-home rapid test must self-isolate and book a diagnostic PCR test at an Assessment Centre using the [on-line referral form](#).
- Once you have your test completed at the Assessment Centre, you will be able to obtain your result in myHealthNB after 48 hours. It may take longer, depending upon test volumes.

10 What should I do if I am contacted by Public Health because I have been identified as a close contact of a known case?

- If you have been advised by Public Health to isolate, you must do so even if you have a negative at-home rapid test.

11 Who can pick up a rapid test kit?

- Anyone 16 years of age or older can pick up a rapid test kit at a centre through Horizon Health or Vitalité Health Network.
- Each individual in attendance will be provided 1 kit.
- Proof of vaccination is not required.

12 Are these tests safe?

- Rapid tests use a swab that is minimally invasive and safe to use. We have prepared an instructional video to help you feel more comfortable performing the test.

13 Is a rapid antigen POCT acceptable for travel purposes?

- If you must travel to or from an international destination, please visit the Government of Canada's travel advice and advisories page for your destination(s) regularly to verify travel health recommendations and safety and security information.
- A negative rapid POCT is not acceptable for destinations that require a negative PCR test.

14 How should at-home rapid tests be disposed of?

- After testing at home, used rapid POCT materials can be disposed of with your household trash.