

Training Module: Best Practices for Point-of-Care Testing

Provincial Antigen Screening Program

LAST UPDATED: SEPTEMBER 24, 2021

Visit ontariohealth.ca/antigen-test to watch a training video on this topic.

Overview

By the end of this module, you will understand the best practices for point-of-care testing when conducting rapid antigen testing on site and at-home, including:

- The need for testing oversight, training and competency of personnel involved
- The facility and testing area recommendations
- How to receive, store and use equipment and supplies
- What infection prevention, occupational health and safety measures should be in place



Rapid Testing Lead, Personnel, and Training and Competency

Clinical Guidance

- Any trained individual can perform point-of-care antigen testing, in accordance with the product manufacturer's label.
- The Ministry of Health has provided a clinical endorsement for voluntary self-swabbing under the supervision of a trained individual.
- Employers/Individuals may also choose to participate in voluntary unsupervised and unobserved self-testing at home if adequately trained.
- **Note:** Nasopharyngeal swab is a controlled act and can only be performed by certain regulated health care professionals.
- Testing should occur at a minimum of once every 7 days if the community prevalence is low, and up to 2-3 times per week.

New Testing Guidelines – Directive 6

- All staff, volunteers, students, and contractors at public hospitals, home and community care service providers, Local Health Integration Networks, and ambulance services) will be required to undertake rapid antigen testing unless they are fully vaccinated.
- PASP is being leveraged to offer free tests to sectors required to do mandatory testing, using existing distribution channels and program supports.

Splitting Panbio™ Tests for At-Home Self-Screening

- **Organizations should split a kit of 25 tests into mini screen kits for at-home screening to avoid test wastage.**
 - Mini screen kits should contain all the supplies needed for up to 4 weeks worth of screening for each participant
- **How to create mini kits:**
 1. The organization should conduct the positive and negative control swabs on each new lot of rapid antigen tests for quality assurance purposes.
 2. Collect all the supplies needed for the chosen frequency of screening, including packaged swabs, tubes, test cartridges, a permanent marker for labelling the tubes with the correct date, and any written documentation about the at-home screening process (see attached image).

Splitting Panbio™ Tests for At-Home Self-Screening

3. Pre-fill all tubes with the buffer solution to the fill line (approximately ten drops).
 - If you use too little or too much liquid, you may get an incorrect test result.
 - Do not touch the liquid itself, the bottle dispenser tip, or the test tube opening with your hands.
 - Use only the liquid provided in the kit. Do not replace the liquid any other liquids (e.g. tap water) otherwise the results may correct.
 - Note that the buffer solution will last in the tubes until the expiration date of the test.



4. Ensure the caps on both ends of the tube are securely fastened.

5. Put supplies into a ziploc bag or another container and label with the participant's name (if desired).



Rapid Testing Lead

- Each site must designate a rapid testing lead (e.g., an administrator, director of care or other lead) to oversee rapid testing implementation.
- The lead:
 - Assumes responsibility for quality oversight of all testing performed at their site;
 - Ensures that quality management best practices are in place (e.g., training and competency, equipment and supply inspection, document management, etc.); and
 - Has a process in place to address occurrences when quality management best practices are not followed.
- If a site is hiring a service provider to implement rapid testing, the testing lead will be the consistent primary liaison to the service provider.
 - Service provider ensures that steps are taken to ensure best practices for quality testing.

Personnel, Training and Competency

- Identify trained individuals who will collect specimens, perform testing, and communicate test results to individuals being tested and to public health, when required.
- Train and confirm competency of all staff involved in the testing process:
 - Pre-testing (e.g., register staff, prepare kits and labelling)
 - Testing (e.g., specimen collection)
 - Post-testing (e.g., result recording, notification, documentation)
- Re-train staff who have not been involved in implementing the testing process in the last 3 months.
- Testing clinic staff must treat all health information as confidential following the *Personal Health Information Protection Act* ([PHIPA](#)).
 - Ensure testing staff sign a confidentiality agreement.



Facility, Equipment and Supplies, and Storage

Facility (1/2)

- The dedicated testing area should:
 - Be maintained at 15-30°C (room temperature)
 - Accommodate for privacy to conduct the swabbing and privacy for reading and recording the results
 - Allow for physical distancing and safety for 3 people to operate and move around the clinic
 - Be large enough to place a table for test processing (e.g., folding table with a non-absorbent surface that is easy to clean)
 - Avoid slippery or absorbent surfaces (e.g., carpeted floors, wooden tables, upholstered furniture)
 - Avoid fans and stand-alone air conditioners



Facility (2/2)

- Consider designating a closed-off space for testing to help mitigate any potential transmission caused by spillage of extracted specimens that may contain live virus.
- Consider having sufficient space for an ample supply of personal protective equipment (PPE) and test kits to be kept close-at-hand.
- Provide access to eye-wash stations, hand hygiene products and splash guards.
- Keep the test kit materials, specimens that have been collected but not yet tested, discarded waste, and the test processing area separate from one another.
- Ensure that the testing table is not set up in direct sunlight.
- Conduct a local risk assessment prior to testing.

Equipment and Supplies

- When receiving a shipment of COVID-19 antigen test kits, inspect them and notify distribution centre if kits are damaged or defective.
- Track lot numbers and expiry dates, to ensure that test kits are used before they expire.
- Do not use the test device if the foil pouch is damaged or seal is broken – discard immediately.
- Once test device is removed from the foil pouch, it should be used immediately for testing.

Storage

- Store the COVID-19 antigen test kits between 2-30°C; DO NOT FREEZE.
- If test kits become frozen during shipment, do not use.
- During the winter and summer months, shipments will be temperature controlled to ensure quality during transit.
- Test kits must be brought to room temperature (i.e., 15-30°C) before use.



Quality Assurance

Quality Control Testing

- Quality control swabs should be tested by staff who will be operating the testing station.
- Quality control swabs should be tested:
 - with each new shipment of kit
 - with any new kit lot number
 - by all newly trained operators before they begin testing individuals
 - for sites using **>1 box of tests/day**, perform quality control swabs at the beginning of the day before testing begins
 - for sites performing less than **<1 box of tests/day**, perform quality control swabs each time a new kit box is opened or at least weekly, whichever is more frequent
- It is important to time the control test for the full 15 minutes.
- Please note that the Panbio™ kit = 25 tests/box and the BD Veritor™ kit = 30 tests/box.

Tracking Quality Control Results

- An Excel spreadsheet results tracker has been developed to enable employers to document their quality control testing results, including:
 - The date on which the testing was performed;
 - The lot number being tested;
 - Which control swab was tested (positive or negative); and
 - Whether the testing passed or failed.
- This tracker is available on the Ontario Health website under the “Documenting and Reporting Results” section: ontariohealth.ca/antigen-test



Specimen Management, Interpretation and Reporting

Specimen Management

- Before collecting a sample, confirm the individual's identification by checking at least two unique identifiers.
- Handle only one specimen at a time when setting up a test.
- Track the individual's two identifiers on the test and confirm that they match those of the individual being tested.

Testing

- Follow the product insert and the Ontario Health Onboarding Guide when performing and interpreting the test.

Results Interpretation, Recording and Notification

- If an invalid result is received, instructions may not have been followed correctly or the sample may have been too viscous. It is recommended to read the instructions again before conducting repeat testing with a new specimen.
- Record test results on paper or electronically with the name of the individual tested (with two unique identifiers), test result, test used, and date and time tested.
- Ensure the following can be traced back to the testing results, if necessary:
 - who performed the test
 - who was notified of the test result
 - the kit lot number
 - quality control results
- Communicate test results to the person being tested.



Infection Prevention, Occupational Health and Safety

Infection Prevention, Occupational Health and Safety

- Use infection prevention and safety precautions recommended by the manufacturer or provincial authorities
- Wear gloves, gowns, masks, and face shields when handling patient specimens and used devices
- Do not eat, drink, smoke, vape, handle contact lenses or apply cosmetics in the rapid testing area
- Clean and disinfect the rapid testing area regularly and as soon as any spills occur
- Dispose of specimens, kits, and other contaminated materials carefully in an appropriate biohazard container

Clinical Guidance – Waste Management On Site

- Waste generated from rapid antigen screening tests in workplaces is considered a hazardous waste under the Environmental Protection Act.
- Waste from these tests is exempt from collection, storage and transportation requirements as long as the waste is disposed in Ontario.
- This waste must still be disposed of at a waste facility approved to handle biomedical waste.
- Anyone collecting, storing or transporting these kits should follow Ontario's guidance on the [Safe Handling and Management of Rapid Antigen COVID-19 Testing Waste.](#)

Clinical Guidance –Waste Management At Home

- For waste generated from at-home rapid antigen screening, the regulatory requirements for managing the hazardous waste under the Environmental Protection Act do not apply.
- People undertaking at-home screening should consult local municipal by-laws on the proper disposal of this waste to ensure it can be disposed of with household trash.



Supporting Tools and Resources

Training Resources Available from Ontario Health

- Ontario Health website - ontariohealth.ca/antigen-test
 - COVID-19 Antigen Rapid Testing Onboarding Guides ([Panbio](#) and [BD Veritor](#)), which contain:
 - Frequently Asked Questions
 - Rapid Test Information Sheet
 - Primer on Best Practices
 - Go-Live Readiness Checklist
 - Training modules:
 - Implementing a Rapid Antigen Screening Clinic with Panbio™ COVID-19 Antigen Rapid Test
 - Implementing a Rapid Antigen Screening Clinic with BD Veritor™ COVID-19 Antigen Rapid Test
 - Best Practices for Point-of-Care Testing
 - Specimen Collection
 - Documenting and Reporting Results
 - Self-Collection
 - At-home Self-Screening

Questions?

- For Directive #6 for COVID-19 Vaccination Policy in Health Settings visit https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/directives/vaccination_policy_in_health_settings.pdf
- For Directive #6: Resource Guide, visit https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/directives/directive_6_policy_resource.pdf
- For more information about this presentation contact covid19testing@ontariohealth.ca

Disclaimer: This document was developed by Ontario Health for training and guidance purposes. The application and use of this document is the responsibility of the user. Ontario Health assumes no liability resulting from any such application or use.