



Rapid Antigen Tests – Frequently Asked Questions

Rapid Antigen Tests (RAT) are provided by Yukon Government for symptomatic persons of all ages who do not meet the higher risk criteria for a PCR test at the COVID-19 testing sites.

Why these tests being used in Yukon?

Yukon government as well as other local agencies provide access to free home based rapid antigen tests or RAT to support other options for persons to access testing that is a low-barrier option for Yukoners. This is especially important within the context of high community transmission and an omicron wave, where PCR testing needs to be prioritized for those at highest risk of morbidity and mortality as well as those who have contact with higher risk settings. This testing approach also provides more individual autonomy in the management of COVID-19 as we transition to a more endemic phase in a highly immunized population where there is less severity of illness.

Can I trust a RAT result?

It is important to note that the sensitivity and specificity of these tests differ from that of lab-based molecular tests and can vary widely from product to product. This is also true in the detection of variants of concern like Omicron. Within the context of widespread community transmission of COVID-19 the likelihood of a positive RAT reflecting true infection is high. However, the utility of a negative result, specifically in the presence of symptoms or lack of repeat testing is suboptimal and should be interpreted with caution. A negative RAT should never be used to change a recommended isolation time nor be used to support symptomatic persons continued presence within a workplace. This especially true for symptomatic health care workers or persons who access higher risk settings.

What if someone meets the PCR criteria, but have already had a positive RAT?

If someone has tested positive by RAT but meets the criteria above, isolate, notify YCDC of the result and arrange a PCR test for confirmation.

What if someone meets the PCR criteria, but have already tested negative for a RAT?

Given the likelihood of a false negative, arrange for a PCR test and continue to isolate.

Who should not be getting a RAT?

Symptomatic healthcare providers and others listed in the PCR testing recommendations, are not recommended a RAT. RAT testing is not as sensitive as PCR, therefore it has a higher likelihood of false negative results.

The goal of COVID-19 testing in the context of widespread omicron transmission in a highly immunized population is to protect those who current research has shown are most at risk of a severe outcome, and those who work in high risk or congregate settings.

PCR testing criteria for any symptomatic individual meeting the following criteria:

- Unvaccinated or partially vaccinated people who are 12 years or older (have not received 2 doses of mRNA vaccine greater than 2 weeks prior to exposure)
- Residents or staff of a congregate setting:
 - Long-term care and residential care homes



- Correction centres
- Shelters and transition homes
- Mines
- Patients in acute care settings
- Front line health care workers with direct patient care (for example family physicians, nurses, dentists) and first responders
- People who are 50 years and older
- People who are pregnant
- People who have one or more risk factors for severe disease:
 - Obesity (BMI >30 kg/m²)
 - Type 1 or 2 diabetes mellitus
 - Chronic respiratory disease
 - Chronic kidney disease
 - Cardiovascular or cerebrovascular disease
 - Immunocompromised or receiving immunosuppressive therapy
 - Intellectual or developmental disabilities