

KW Habilitation is an early adopter of the Provincial Antigen Screening Program. Rapid Antigen Testing is a newly launched program that allows employers in priority settings to add an additional safety measure in high-risk and essential workplaces, to help reduce the spread of COVID-19. Regular screening will help identify those who may be unknowingly carrying the virus without experiencing any symptoms and consequently are at risk of spreading the infection.

KWH put together an enthusiastic team, consisting of medical professionals, interested Direct Support Professionals and KWH Leadership who are suitably named “The RAT Pack” to guide and implement the process.

1. What is COVID-19 rapid antigen testing?

At KW Habilitation Rapid Antigen Testing is performed using a deep nasal swab (approximately 2.5cm) of both nostrils. Results are ready in approximately 15 minutes.

2. What Does “Asymptomatic” Mean?

Some people can be carrying the virus without experiencing any symptoms.

3. How often should I have R.A.T.?

This is not a “one and done” situation, once clinics are fully operational you should come 2 x a week either at KWH or Sunbeam- convenient options will be available. The more we participate, the better the surveillance.

4. Who Should Get a Rapid Antigen Test?

Antigen tests **should only be used on asymptomatic individuals** who have passed the initial standard screening conducted within the workplace. They should not be used for symptomatic individuals, or individuals who have had close contact with known positive cases in the context of this program. Symptomatic individuals, or individual who have had close contact with known positive cases should be directed to an Assessment Centre for testing.

5. If an individual previously tested positive for COVID-19, should they be tested again?

An individual who has previously had laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 AND was cleared by the Waterloo Region Public Health, should **generally not be re-tested for surveillance purposes** due to persistent shedding. Previously cleared individuals should continue to follow public health guidance for COVID-19 prevention, including self-isolating after high-risk exposures to cases. *** Note: If it has been more than 90 days since an active infection, the person can consider R.A.T again

6. If an individual has been vaccinated for COVID-19, do they still need to be tested?

Individuals who have received a COVID-19 vaccine, regardless of whether they received one or two doses, are still able to receive an accurate result from a rapid antigen test. Vaccinated individuals should not be excluded from rapid antigen screening initiatives, as it is unknown at this time if they can still transmit COVID-19 despite being vaccinated.

7. If I have had COVID-19 should I participate in the Rapid Antigen Screening?

As per Provincial Testing Guidance, **individuals who have previously been infected with and recovered from COVID-19 should generally not undergo repeat testing**, including by rapid antigen testing as part of this program.

8. Can Rapid Antigen Tests Detect COVID-19 Variants of Concern?

It is believed that rapid antigen tests are still able to detect COVID-19 caused by a Variant of Concern (e.g. the U.K., South African or Brazilian variants), however, a rapid antigen test cannot tell if a COVID-19 infection has been caused by a Variant of Concern. If an individual tests positive with a rapid antigen test, they will be required to seek a confirmatory, lab-based PCR test within 24 hours. At present, all positive lab-based PCR samples in Ontario are undergoing screening for any of the known Variants of Concern.

9. What Does It Mean if I Get a Positive Test Result?

As per Provincial Testing Guidance, a positive result on a rapid antigen test is considered a **preliminary positive and must be followed up with a diagnostic laboratory-based COVID-19 test** to confirm the results within 24 hours.

10. Can I go to work if I receive a Positive Result on Rapid Antigen Test?

As per Provincial Testing Guidance, an individual who receives a positive antigen test result **must self-isolate, as must their close contacts, until the result of the confirmatory, lab-based PCR test is known.**

11. Does a preliminary positive result on the BD Veritor COVID-19 Rapid Antigen Test mean the site is in outbreak?

No, a preliminary positive result does not mean the site is in outbreak. The individual who tested positive is required to have a confirmatory PCR test.

WR Public Health units will remain the authoritative body on the declaration of a COVID-19 outbreak, which will continue to be based on the presence of positive results on a confirmatory, lab-based PCR.

12. Can we use Rapid Screening during an Outbreak to get results faster?

Antigen tests **should not be used in either a confirmed or suspected outbreak in a workplace setting**, per provincial testing guidance.

13. Do staff operating the rapid antigen testing clinics need to sign confidentiality agreements?

Sites conducting rapid antigen testing must treat all health information as confidential following the Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA). Confidentiality agreements must be signed by staff operating the rapid-test clinic.

14. What are the Benefits of Participating In the Program ?

A key benefit of participating in the Provincial Antigen Screening Program is that rapid, on-site testing may facilitate the identification of an individual infected with COVID-19 infection in the workplace that regular screening protocols might otherwise miss. It may therefore help prevent asymptomatic individuals from unknowingly spreading COVID-19 in the workplace and helps to break the chain of transmission for COVID-19.