

Frequently Asked Questions Rapid Antigen Screening (RAS)

Q: Why is rapid screening coming to our site?

A: In February, the Government of Alberta announced that all continuing care facilities not in a COVID-19 outbreak would implement Rapid Antigen Screening.

Q: What is the goal of rapid screening?

A: The goal of rapid screening is to **detect asymptomatic COVID-19 positive staff** as early as possible. This will lead to less spread throughout our communities.

Q: Is rapid screening mandatory?

A: No. While we strongly encourage all staff to participate, **we require your [consent](#)**. Consent can be given at any point and can be withdrawn as well. The consent will be good from a year of signing. On subsequent RAS screening, verbal consent will suffice. Please complete the consent form before your first screening opportunity. [Download consent form \(pdf\)](#) or scan the QR code below.

Q: If I've been vaccinated for Covid-19, do I still participate in the screening process?

A: Yes. The vaccination is not 100% effective. We encourage all staff, including those vaccinated, to participate in the screening program.

Q: Will I receive a rapid test before every shift?

A: No. As per Alberta Health guidelines, **all staff must be offered rapid screening weekly**. Screening times will vary throughout the week to ensure all shifts and departments are captured.

Q: Where will swabbing occur?

A: Swabbing clinics will be held in a designated space as chosen by your site. Staff will come down to the designated area to be swabbed by the tester.

Q: How long does the test take? Do I have to stay in the swabbing clinic until I receive my result?

A: The screening takes about 15 min but depending on the screening kit at your site, swabs may be batched together and then processed. This would result in a slightly longer window to receive your results.

You do not have to wait in the swabbing clinic for your result. Staff must continue to use all required safety precautions, including appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and physical distancing

Q: What is involved in a rapid test?

A:

- You will receive a dual nose swab from a trained tester.
- You begin/ continue on your shift while you wait for your result.
- If your rapid antigen test is:

Negative	No further action is required.
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Inconclusive	You will be called back to do a second rapid antigen test. If this is also inconclusive, it will be treated as a positive result.
Positive	<p>You will be asked to do a Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) swab test through Alberta Health Services (AHS) and sent home to self-isolate while you await your result.</p> <p>Book your AHS Healthcare Worker COVID-19 Test or scan the QR Code below.</p> <p>If your lab-confirmed PCR test remains positive, AHS will notify you. Please contact your supervisor to advise them and follow the return-to-work guidance provided.</p> <p>If your lab-confirmed PCR test is negative, AHS will notify you. Please contact your supervisor to advise them and follow the return-to-work guidance provided.</p>
EXCEPTION	If you have recently recovered from a COVID infection and test positive on the rapid antigen test, the site will notify the Zone Rep to seek direction from the MOH.

Q: I've had a PCR nasal swab and it was very uncomfortable. How is this swab different?

A: The RAS nasal swabs are less invasive and uncomfortable for the individual being screened than a standard PCR swab. Depending on the test kit at your site, the nasal swab will be inserted 2 to 2.5 cms.

Q: I have tested positive on the RAS test and have been sent home. Do I get paid? (NEW)

When a staff member is sent home due to a positive RAS test, the employee will continue to be paid and considered on a leave of absence (LOA) until they confirm their PCR COVID test results. If the test results are negative, the employee will return to work as per normal. If the PCR test comes back positive, the employee will be coded paid sick time, if you have it banked. If you don't have sick time, it's considered an unpaid leave of absence (LOA). HR will monitor your absence to get updates on further testing results and appropriate return to work.

Q: If my test was negative, do I still need to wear my PPE?

A: Yes. As we have seen in practice, the window to COVID-19 to infect can be up to 14 days. All routine and additional PPE is still required. A negative screen does not exempt staff from following public health measures.

Q: When will rapid screening begin?

A: Our official go-live date is March 15th. However, many of our sites will be beginning trial runs of the rapid antigen screening starting on March 1st. This will allow us to trial and revise our plans and processes as needed.

Q: Can or will rapid screening also be used for residents, designated family/support persons, other visitors to a site?

A: No. The immediate focus is to screen all staff.

Q: What if our site is on outbreak?

A: If your site is on Outbreak, RAS for staff will halt and outbreak processes will take over. Once the outbreak is over, the RAS staff screening should resume.

Resources – Scan with your phone camera or click on the link to access:



[Consent Form: Rapid Antigen Screening \(pdf\)](#)



[AHS Healthcare Worker COVID-19 Test](#)