

I would like a COVID-19 test 

I need a test because of:

- Symptoms and exposure
- Long-term care worker or visitor
- Temporary Foreign Worker
- Indigenous
- Test before scheduled surgery, treatment or admission
- Confirmatory test after receiving a positive rapid test or self-test
- You belong to any other targeted testing group as outlined in guidance from the Chief Medical Officer of Health

NOT SURE IF YOU NEED A TEST? **TAKE THE SELF-ASSESSMENT**

You can get a **free PCR COVID-19 test**

1. PCR tests can be administered at a [COVID-19 testing location](#)
2. [Take-home PCR self-collection kits for eligible individuals](#), allowing them to pick up their free test and drop off their specimens at [participating pharmacies](#)

I don't have symptoms or have not recently been in contact with someone with COVID-19 but:

I need a test:

- to satisfy a travel requirement,
- for entry to a private venue, event or gathering which requires a negative test result to enter

You will need to purchase a private COVID-19 test at a participating location. Some examples include:

- [Lifelabs](#)
- [Shoppers Drug Mart](#)

Information about COVID-19: Travel, testing and borders [can be found here](#)

I need a test:

- to be sure I am not passing COVID-19 along at a school, workplace or gathering and keep my community safe
- to screen to be sure I am not passing COVID-19 along and catch infection early before going to school, workplace etc.

You are best to use a **Rapid Antigen take home test** available from schools, at select locations for free, or online for purchase as an effective COVID-19 screening tool

*NOTE: If you test positive on a rapid antigen test, you **must** have a follow up PCR test. Follow the steps in the orange boxes to the left.

[Public Health Ontario Information on Self Testing](#)





What is the difference between all these COVID-19 tests?

Rapid antigen tests

How they work:

Rapid antigen tests can be done at home or by a health care professional to detect certain proteins in the virus to confirm its presence. A sample is collected using a swab in the nose and/or throat or nasopharynx (behind your nose and above the back of your throat). Results from your rapid antigen test will be ready in about 15 minutes.

Where we're using them

Rapid antigen tests are available for **screening people with no symptoms (asymptomatic)**. To help keep workplaces safe and prevent the spread of COVID-19, many workplaces are using rapid antigen tests to routinely screen asymptomatic employees and other approved groups. Eligible workplaces can access tests for free.

For more information on the use of rapid antigen tests, please visit the [COVID-19 COVID-19 Guidance: Considerations for Antigen Point-of-Care Testing \(PDF\)](#).

Find out if your organization can [apply to get free rapid test kits](#).

If you test positive on a rapid antigen test

Rapid antigen tests are not diagnostic tests. A positive result on a rapid antigen screen is considered a preliminary positive. Those who test positive on a rapid antigen test must get a follow-up lab-based PCR test or a rapid point-of-care molecular test within 48 hours to confirm the result.

Confirm your rapid antigen test result with a PCR test at a [designated testing location](#). You may need to make an appointment.

Rapid point-of-care (POC) molecular tests

How they work

Rapid point-of-care molecular tests detect the genetic material of the virus to confirm if you have COVID-19. A health care professional or other trained individual will collect a fluid sample by swabbing your nose or throat. On average, results from your rapid POC molecular test will be ready within 24 hours.

Where we're using them

We are using rapid POC molecular tests primarily in rural and remote settings primarily for health care workers to **diagnose a confirmed COVID-19 case**. This is because:

- turnaround times for traditional lab-based PCR test results may be slower in these areas due to logistical challenges of transporting specimens long distances from these settings to labs
- slow turnaround times for PCR tests can delay our essential workers, including health care workers, from returning to work if they are negative
- we are supporting community-led efforts to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in rural and remote regions, including Indigenous communities

Public health units across the province will also use them to help detect positive cases more quickly. For example, rapid testing may be used in early outbreak investigations and testing campaigns for vulnerable populations, like people who are homeless or people living in congregate settings.

Molecular polymerase chain reaction (or PCR)

PCR tests detect the COVID-19 virus itself and diagnose COVID-19. If you're being tested for a possible current case of COVID-19, you'll receive one of these tests.