



When should I use a Rapid Antigen Test?



A Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) is a do-it-yourself test that checks for COVID proteins in a sample from your cheeks, throat and nose. You get a result within 20 minutes. RATs are not perfect. **Even if your RAT is negative, you may have and be able to spread COVID.**

There are 4 main uses for a RAT:

01 Testing when you have symptoms:

If you have symptoms, assume you have COVID and self-isolate.

If you have RATs available, swab the inside of each of your cheeks, then your throat, and then each nostril for the most accurate result. For instructions about how to collect a sample, visit rebrand.ly/RAT-Collect-Sample.



If you have COVID symptoms, **a positive RAT confirms that you have COVID.** If you have a positive RAT, **self-isolate for 5 or 10 days.** For more information, see rebrand.ly/Feeling-Unwell.

Some people you live with may also need to isolate. For more information, see rebrand.ly/COVID-Close-Contact.

If you have COVID symptoms, **a negative RAT does not mean that you don't have COVID.** Two negative RATs collected at least 24 hours apart mean that it is less likely that you have COVID.

If you have had two negative RATs:

- » Anyone you live with who does not have symptoms can stop isolating.
- » You can stop isolating once you have not had a fever for at least 24 hours, and you have been getting better for at least 24 hours (at least 48 hours if you had vomiting or diarrhea).

02 As part of an organized program:

If you take part in an organized screening program, you could be helping reduce the risk of COVID spreading to places where people must be together like hospitals, long-term care homes, schools.

People in these settings who have no signs of COVID can use RATs multiple times a week to detect the virus before symptoms develop. People who have tested positive for COVID can use RATs for screening starting 30 days after they had a positive test.

03 Testing to return to work:

If you work at a hospital, long-term care home or other high-risk setting, and you had COVID or had been exposed to it, RATs can clear you to return to work sooner and help with critical staffing shortages. For other people who have COVID, RATs cannot be used to shorten the isolation period.

04 One-time testing when you do not have symptoms:

If you have no COVID symptoms and you get a negative RAT result, that does not tell you very much.

People infected with COVID may test negative for several days before testing positive on a RAT. Do not let a negative result reassure you.

We do not recommend one-off testing before a social event. If you decide to use a RAT for this purpose, test yourself on the same day as the gathering, ideally only a few hours before the event.

Remember: While COVID continues to be common in Ontario, there are things you can do to protect yourself and others.

- ✓ Get all vaccine doses that are recommended for you.
- ✓ If you feel sick, stay home.
- ✓ Wear a well-fitted mask in indoor public spaces.
- ✓ Gather outdoors whenever possible.