COVID-19 Rapid (at-Home) Tests

First Nations Health Authority
Health through wellness

INFORMATION FOR INDIVIDUALS

At-home rapid tests can be used to determine if you have COVID-19 when you have cold or flu-like symptoms.

You can perform the test yourself at home and the results are ready in less than 30 minutes, depending on the brand of test you use.

At-home rapid antigen tests can be used to support diagnosis of COVID-19 in symptomatic individuals and they are a good tool to help detect growing clusters in communities.

Remember: Seek medical care if you feel you need it, whether you test positive or negative. Go to the local emergency department or call 9-1-1 if you find it hard to breathe, have chest pain, can't drink anything, feel very sick, and/or feel confused.

Individuals at higher risk of Severe COVID-19 Illness
Due to medical conditions or vaccination status, some individuals may be at a higher risk of getting severely ill from COVID-19. These individuals may be eligible for treatments to help prevent severe COVID-19 illness if given early after symptom onset. For those who are at a higher risk of severe illness or who may be eligible for treatment, FNHA recommends having a testing plan in place. Ideally, this plan would involve connecting with a health care provider for more sensitive testing if possible.

Individuals who are at higher risk of severe illness can still use Rapid Antigen Tests (RAT), but it is recommended that they **re-test every day 5-7 days** after symptom onset. This is to try to avoid false negatives that can occur in early infection with RAT tests. **A RAT positive result is accepted to inform prescribers for treatment purposes.**

More information regarding COVID-19 testing and treatment options for those at higher risk can be found on the FNHA "Know Your Risk. Know Your Options" document.

You can also find out more about COVID-19 treatments and eligibility for treatment by going to: COVID-19 treatments - Province of British Columbia (gov.bc.ca)

If you are unsure, have a discussion with your primary care provider to determine whether you would be at risk for severe illness if infected with COVID-19.

Types of At Home COVID-19 Tests available. What is the difference?

Antigen-Based Assays (Rapid Antigen Tests-RAT)

Rapid antigen tests check for protein fragments specific to the COVID-19 virus. Rapid antigen tests can be very good at detecting the COVID-19 virus when testing is done between **three to seven days** after the start of symptoms. This is when virus levels in the body are at the highest. RATs require more virus in your body in order to register a positive result, **therefore you may have to be further along** into your illness before a RAT test detects the virus. False negatives can occur when there isn't enough virus in your body for the rapid antigen test to detect.

Rapid antigen tests are not used for asymptomatic screening because they do not reliably detect infections in people who do not have cold or flu-like symptoms.

- BTNX
- Panbio
- Artron

How to use a Rapid Antigen Test

Rapid antigen tests (RAT) are done by using a swab to collect a sample from each nostril. The swab will only go a few centimeters inside your nose. It should not hurt. There is some evidence to show that gentle throat swabbing can increase test sensitivity. Users may choose to perform combined oral and nasal sampling as it may increase test sensitivity.

- [How to Use the BTNX At-Home Test](#) (video, FNHA Nursing Manager Leona Smith, Vancouver Coastal Region)
- [How to Use the BTNX At-Home Test](#) (written instructions, FNHA)
- [How to Use the BTNX At-Home Test](#) (video, manufacturer)
- [How to Use the Artron At-Home Test](#) (video, FNHA Nursing Manager Leona Smith, Vancouver Coastal Region)
- [How to Use the Artron At-Home Test](#) (written instructions, BCCDC)
- Combined sample collection method [throat sample collection method from Ontario Health](#)

Nucleic acid amplification test (NAAT) based assays

NAAT-based tests are more reliable for detecting small amounts of COVID-19 than rapid antigen tests (RAT) and are less likely to give a false-negative result. For this reason, these tests are preferred for higher risk individuals when possible as they will likely detect the COVID-19 virus earlier and more reliably. Your community may have access to Lucira if you currently do not have a community health nurse or if there are significant barriers in accessing other methods of NAAT testing, such as regional health authority PCR tests, GeneXpert or ID NOW. There is a very limited supply of Lucira in B.C, which is why this test is prioritized for people who are at a greater risk of severe illness and eligible for treatment.

- **Lucira™ COVID-19 All-In-One Test Kit LAMP**
  - Approved for at home self testing
  - How to use Lucira: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HA0n05d73Gc

Rapid at Home Test Results

NEGATIVE RESULT on Rapid at Home Test

If your result is negative, it means the COVID-19 virus was not detected at the time the test was taken. This could be because there was not enough virus in your body for the test kit to pick it up or that you do not have the virus. **It is still possible that you have COVID-19, especially if you have tested before day three or after day six of the onset of symptoms with a RAT.** If you test negative *but continue to have cold or flu-like symptoms*, the FNHA recommends you:

- self-isolate

- manage your symptoms

- seek health care if symptoms worsen

- test again in 48 hours if lower risk for severe illness and not eligible for treatment

- test again in 24 hours if at risk for severe illness or potentially eligible for treatment. **A RAT positive result is accepted to inform prescribers for treatment purposes**

Even if the COVID-19 test is negative, it is important to self-isolate until your symptoms improve and you feel well enough to return to regular activities. Symptoms might be from other respiratory illnesses that can also make you or others sick.

POSITIVE RESULT on Rapid at Home Test

If your result is positive, it means COVID-19 was detected. You very likely have COVID-19 and could pass it on to others.
Next Steps:

- Self-isolate - for at least five days from the first day you had symptoms if you are fully vaccinated (or under 18 years old), or at least 10 days if you are not fully vaccinated and over 18 years old. The FNHA Health Benefits Isolation Support team can help with accommodation, travel and meals. For eligibility information, call 1-888-305-1505 or see COVID-19 Guide to Medical Transportation Benefits

- manage your symptoms

- notify close contacts (people you live with or those with whom you've had intimate contact)

- Seek health care if symptoms worsen, you are concerned about your health, or if you are at risk for severe illness / are immunocompromised

INVALID RESULT

If your test is not valid:

1. discard all the pieces from the first test

2. wash your hands and repeat the process using the second set of test pieces

3. follow the test instructions again

If you have two invalid test results, get a COVID-19 test at a testing location. Find a Health Authority testing location. If you are served by a First Nations health centre, check to see if testing is available there.

Helpful websites:

- [COVID-19 Testing](#) (FNHA.ca)
- [I have COVID-19](#) (FNHA.ca)
- [What to do if you test positive for COVID-19](#) (BC Centre for Disease Control fact sheet)
- [How to self-isolate](#) (BCCDC.ca)
- [Managing Symptoms](#) (BCCDC.ca)
- [What to do if you are a close contact of someone with COVID-19](#) (BCCDC fact sheet)

If you live in a First Nations community, check to see if there are any enhanced COVID-19 protocols you should be following

Regional or Community-specific requirements of note: