

# Rapid antigen testing

Guidance for critical workers



Version 5

25 FEB 22

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**FOR MORE INFORMATION**  
Please visit [www.health.govt.nz](http://www.health.govt.nz)

## Introduction

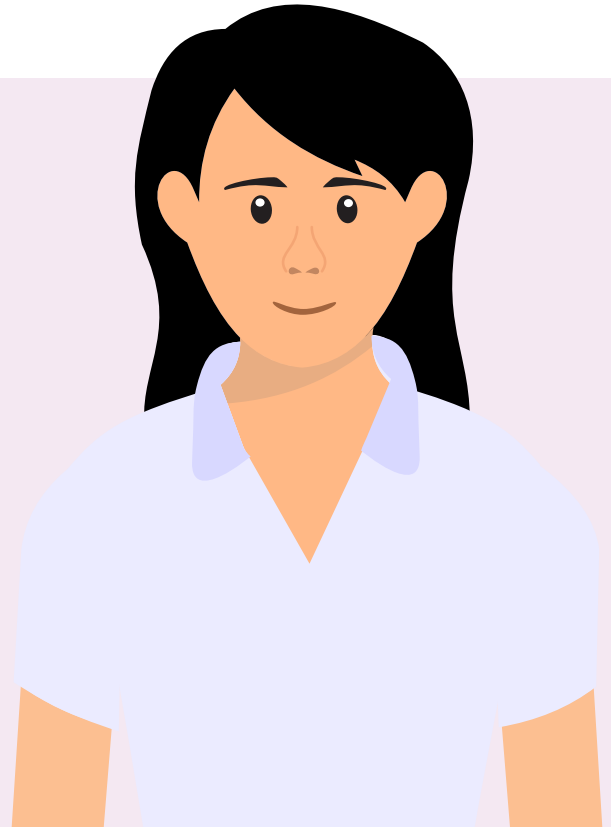
Testing is part of a suite of tools used to protect New Zealanders and to help respond to COVID-19 in our communities.

Rapid antigen tests (RATs) are a type of test which can be carried out at home or with minimal support required.

For a RAT, a swab is taken from the front of the nose. Results are usually available within 20 minutes which helps to detect COVID-19 quickly.

The use of rapid antigen tests can help reduce the spread of COVID-19 by identifying infectious people.

### Helping protect against COVID-19



## Testing your workers

Part of New Zealand's response to Omicron will mean an increased use of rapid antigen tests for critical workers. Using RATs will help ensure that sufficient workers are available to maintain critical infrastructure and supply chains throughout the Omicron outbreak.

As New Zealand responds to the Omicron outbreak, the priority shifts from finding every individual case to protecting priority populations from severe disease and death, ensuring equity and limiting the impact on the country through the protection of critical workforces and infrastructure.

## Isolation requirements

During the Omicron response, isolation time frames and rules for contacts have changed.

For the most up-to-date isolation requirements, please go to the [Contact Tracing page](#) on the Ministry of Health website.

## Close Contact Exemption Scheme

In order to keep New Zealand operating as Omicron spreads, critical services are being provided with a pathway to keep their critical workers returning to work in the event they are exposed to someone with COVID-19. This is known as the **Close Contact Exemption Scheme (CCES)**.

The scheme allows critical workers who would normally have to isolate after becoming a household contact to continue working. All other isolation requirements outside of work remain. More information is available at [business.govt.nz](https://business.govt.nz).

### Critical services



Critical services means working in one of the following sectors:

- Food production and its supply chain
- Key public services like health and emergency services
- Transport
- Critical financial services
- News media
- Social welfare
- Human and animal health and welfare.

### Critical workers



In order to qualify for the exemption a worker must be:

- Deemed critical by their employer
- Work in a critical service
- Asymptomatic
- Vaccinated.

## Models to access RATs

There are two models for accessing RATs by critical worker.

**Model one:** Employers who are centralising the distribution to their critical workers including some Healthcare and Emergency Service Workforces including those who work in District Health Boards, GPs, Pharmacies, Aged Residential Care facilities, Police, Corrections, FENZ and Managed Isolation Quarantine Facilities. Model one **cannot** be accessed by all employers. If you don't have an existing agreement with Health you need to follow model two.

**Model two:** Established for all other critical workers who are employed in critical services.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

Please visit [www.health.govt.nz](https://www.health.govt.nz)

## Confirming you are a household contact

Only those who have been identified as a household contact qualify for **CCES**. If you are a household contact you will receive a text message. This text message can be used as evidence when you pick up your RATs at a Collection Site. The below shows the process for accessing CCES.



### Positive case

Someone in your household tests positive for COVID-19.

#### Step one

After testing positive, cases are encouraged to fill out an online COVID-19 contact tracing form (see image on right). If they do not have access to a phone, they will receive a call from one of our contact tracers. Cases are also encouraged to advise anyone they think could be a close contact (such as their workplace or social contacts). Close contacts do not need to isolate or test, unless they develop symptoms.

#### Step two

In the COVID-19 contact tracing form, the case will identify all people who live with them. They will be asked to provide the full name, date of birth, phone number and email address.



### Household contact

Household contacts need to isolate for the same period as the first case in the household. However those who are asymptomatic and are a critical worker, can register for CCES. Once the case completes the COVID-19 contact tracing form, they will get a text message confirming them as a household contact. This is the text confirmation they will need to use as evidence when picking up RATs.

Kia ora  
{{User.UserAttributes.FirstName}},  
you are a COVID-19 Household  
Contact. You must self-isolate and  
get tested following the Household  
Contact advice given on [https://  
covid19.health.nz/advice/  
household](https://covid19.health.nz/advice/household) If you have received  
this by mistake, please continue to  
follow current COVID-19 guidance.

## Model one: Centralised distribution accessed through employer

Some Healthcare and Emergency Service Workforces including those who work in District Health Boards, GPs, Pharmacies, Aged Residential Care facilities, Police, Corrections, FENZ and Managed Isolation Quarantine Facilities who have been identified as a close contact and need a test to go to work will be given RATs by their employer.

Model one **cannot** be accessed by all employers. If you don't have an existing agreement with Health you need to follow model two.

### Process for Critical Workers



After you become a household contact, you need to follow the steps below to register for CCES and access RATs. The text message confirming you as a household contact is important to prove your eligibility for the programme.

- 1 **Step one:** Contact your employer who can confirm you're eligibility for CCES.
- 2 **Step two:** Your employer works with you to ensure you to get you RATs. This could be done by collecting from an agreed location your employer has setup, or it may be couriered to you directly.
- 3 **Step three :** If you visit a collection point, make sure the pickup is contactless and preferably outdoors. As you are a household contact, you need to follow public health advice, including the isolation requirements.  
  
If you need someone to collect the kits on your behalf then you should ask your employer what verification is required.
- 4 **Step four:** You can take your kits home with you. As a critical worker you need to test before each work day/shift. After testing you need to record your result in **My Covid Record**, as well as advise your employer. If you cannot access **My Covid Record** then please call **0800 222 478** and they will be able to support you with recording your results. Calling the contact centre may take more time so please plan accordingly. A decision tree on what to do after you get your result is [available here](#).

### Key messages

- If you become symptomatic, you must immediately isolate. You should work with your employer to agree the best next steps.
- Your employer can help you agree a preferred testing time each day.
- There is support available on **0800 222 478**, at the [Ministry of Health website](#) and at [business.govt.nz](#).

## Model two: Decentralised distribution accessed through Collection Sites

If your employer does not have an existing relationship with Health to access RATs (model one), then you need to follow the below steps to register for CCES.

### Process for Critical Workers



After you become a household contact, you need to follow the steps below to register for CCES and access RATs. The text message confirming you as a household contact is important to prove your eligibility for the programme.

- 1 **Step one:** Contact your employer and explain that you are a household contact. They can confirm whether you're eligible for CCES. They will give you a letter confirming your employer is a critical service, you're a critical worker and that you're fully vaccinated.
- 2 **Step two:** You can find a link to access the **Rapid Antigen Test Order Form** on the Ministry of Health website. Complete this web form to get an order number. Follow the prompts in the form and make a note of your order number. If you cannot access the form, you can call **0800 222 478** and follow the prompts.
- 3 **Step three :** Visit a Collection Site to pickup your RAT kits. Find out where on [healthpoint](#).
- 4 **Step four:** At the Collection Site, someone will verify the following:
  - Verification letter for the CCES programme (from MBIE)
  - Household contact verification (text message from Contact Tracing)

If you're unable to collect the RATs yourself, someone can collect on your behalf. The nominated person must bring:

  - Verification letter for the CCES programme (from MBIE)
  - Household contact verification (text message from Contact Tracing) – this can be a picture or screenshot
- 5 **Step four:** You can take your kits home with you. As a critical worker you need to test before each work day/shift. After testing you need to record your result in [My Covid Record](#), as well as advise your employer. If you cannot access **My Covid Record** then please call **0800 222 478** and they will be able to support you with recording your results. Calling the contact centre may take more time so please plan accordingly. A decision tree on what to do after you get your result is [available here](#).

### Key messages

- If you become symptomatic, you must immediately isolate. You should work with your employer to agree the best next steps.
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# How to use a Rapid Antigen Test

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Test instructions vary depending on the brand. Many rapid antigen testing kits generally follow the instructions below, but not all. Please follow the manufacturer's instructions.

## Collecting a sample



Remove a nasal swab from the pouch.



Insert the swab into one of your nostrils up to 2-3cm from the edge of the nostril.



Slowly roll the swab 5 times over the surface of the nostril. Using the same swab, repeat this collection process in the other nostril.



Check the kit box instructions to confirm the correct time frame to read your result. This may vary depending on the kit.

## Testing the sample



Peel off aluminium foil seal from the top of the extraction vial, which contains the extraction buffer.



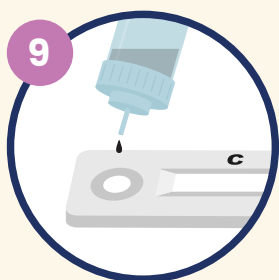
Place the swab into the extraction vial. Rotate the swab vigorously at least 5 times.



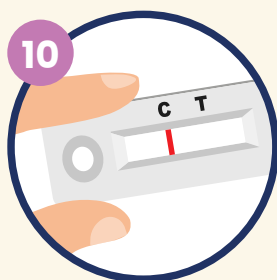
Remove the swab by rotating the swab against the vial, while squeezing the sides to release the liquid from the swab.



Close the vial with the provided cap and push firmly onto the vial. Mix thoroughly by flicking the bottom of the tube.



Turn vial upside down and hold sample over sample well. Squeeze vial gently. Allow the required drops according to the kit instructions, to fall into the sample well.



Please check on the kit instructions and follow the confirmed time to check for your test result.

## Reading your result

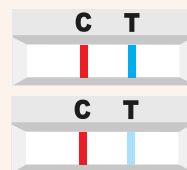
### Negative

One line next to the **C** indicates the test is negative.



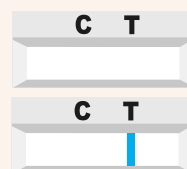
### Positive

Two lines, one next to **C** and one next to **T** (even faint lines) indicate the test is positive.



### Invalid Result

No line next to **C** indicates the test is invalid.



## Reporting your result

You need to report your result. This can be done on My Covid Record.

Log into [mycovidrecord.health.nz](https://mycovidrecord.health.nz) or call 0800 222 478 and press option 3.

If you are in the Close Contact Exemption Scheme, you should advise your employer of your result.





# What to do when I receive my COVID-19 rapid antigen test result.

Please find below a simple decision tree to guide you on the key steps you should follow once you have received your COVID-19 rapid antigen test result.

## READ YOUR RESULT

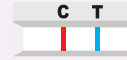
### Negative

One line next to the **C** indicates the test is negative.



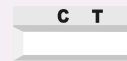
### Positive

Two lines, one next to **C** and one next to **T**, even faint lines indicate the test is positive



### Failed/Invalid Result

No line next to **C** indicates the test is invalid.



I need to use a RAT before each work day

Undertake  
RAT test

Failed

Detected  
(C&T lines visible)

Not detected  
(Only C line visible)

You must advise your employer of the result, and record your result in My Covid Record or on 0800 222 478.

Is this your first RAT  
test for the day?

No

Please follow the manufacturer guidelines on how long to wait before a retest

You are a case and will be contacted with next steps. Ensure follow isolation requirements.

Go to work

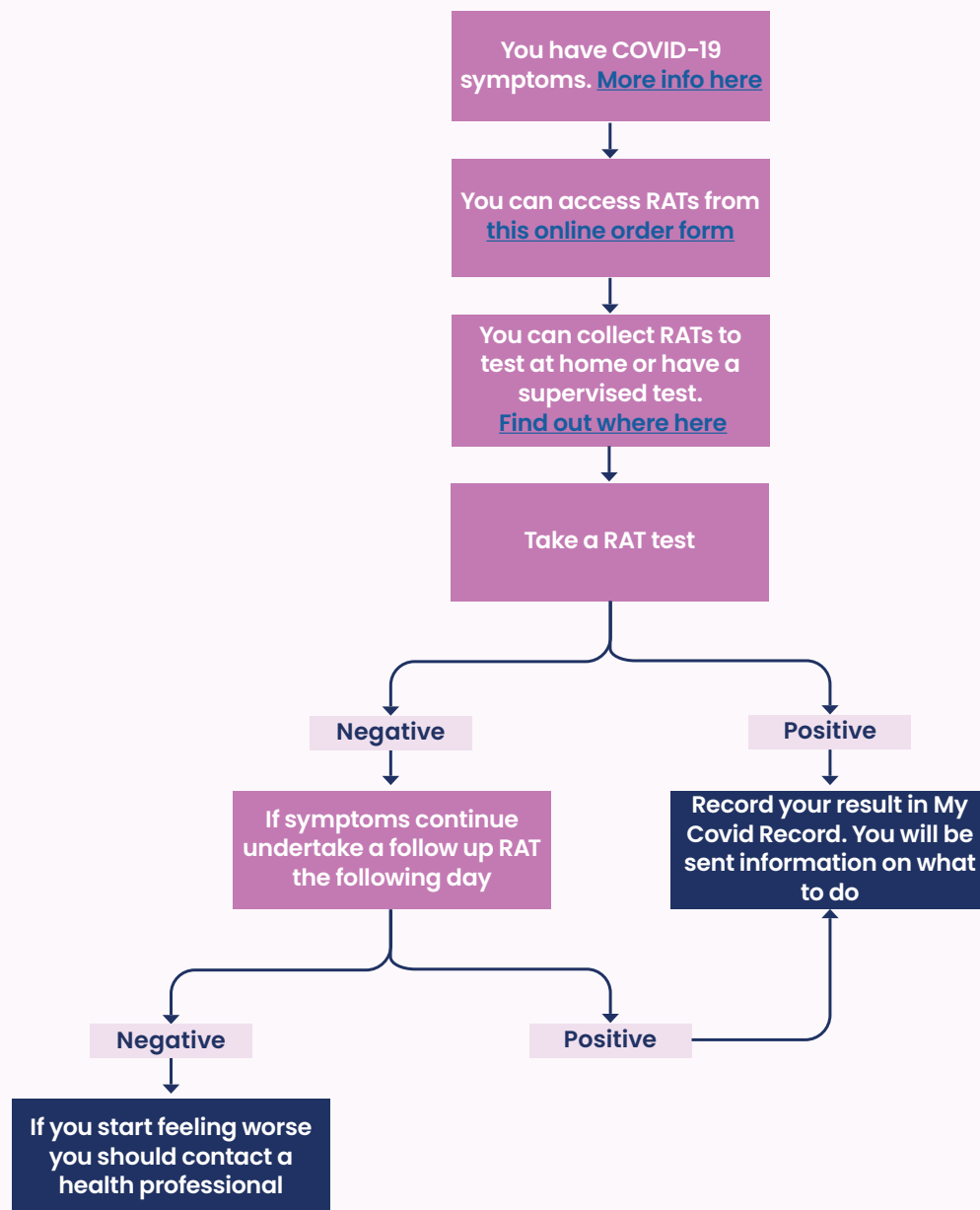
FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please visit [www.health.govt.nz](http://www.health.govt.nz)

# COVID-19 – Testing guidance



I have some symptoms, do I need to test?



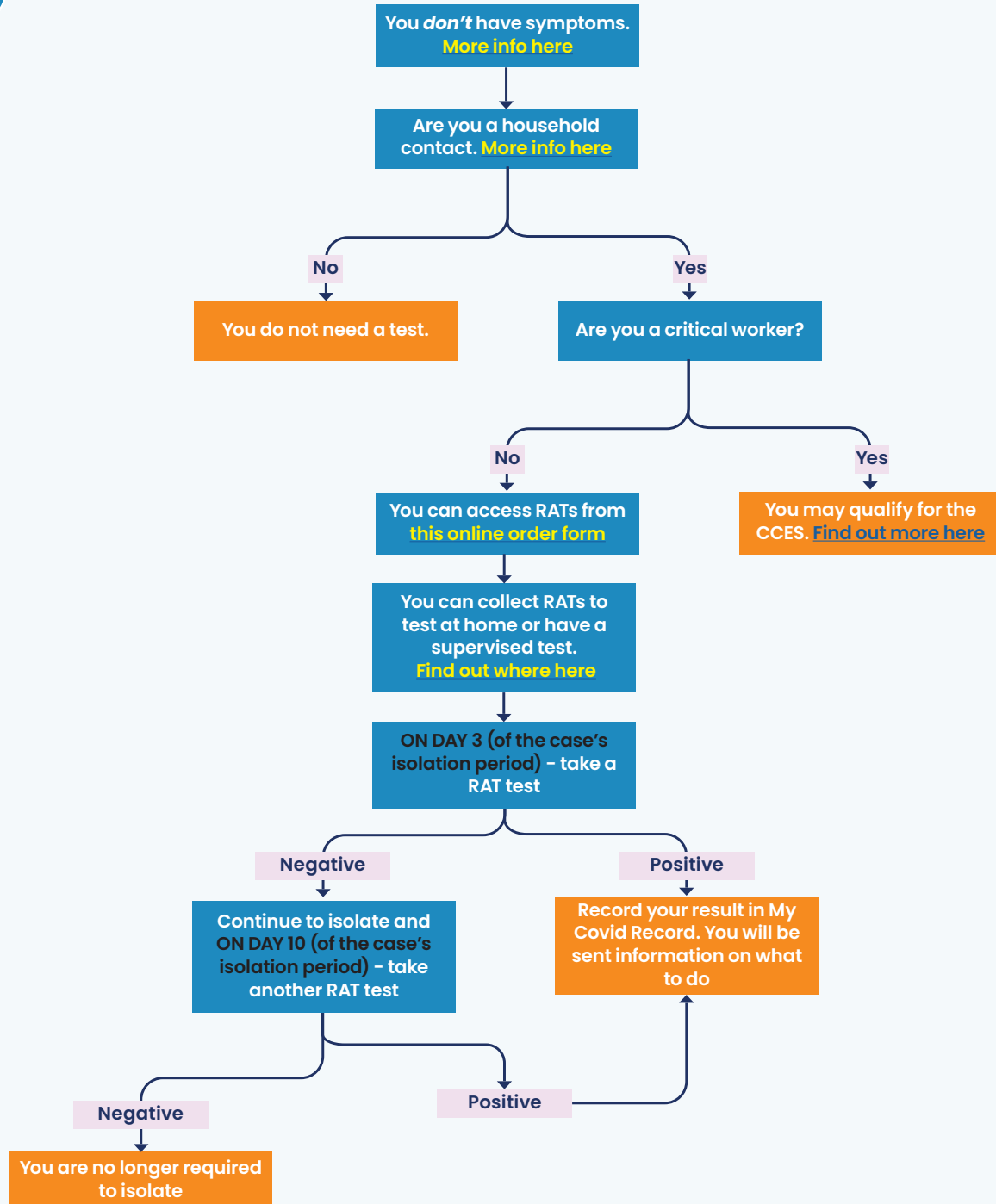
## Key messages

- If you become a case, you will likely be notified by text. Some may be called.
- Tell your household, workplace and any other places which may have been exposed (e.g. schools).
- Self-isolate at home for 10 days from when you got tested, or when your symptoms started.

# COVID-19 – Testing guidance



I don't have any symptoms, should I test?



## Key messages

- Even if other members of your household test positive, if you remain asymptomatic and have a negative day 10 RAT test (day 10 of first household case) then you can leave isolation.
- If you live with someone who has COVID-19, you need to self-isolate. [Isolation rules are here.](#)
- Wait until day 10 for your follow up test, if you don't develop symptoms.
- If you're unwell or need advice, contact a health professional.

We appreciate all that you do to keep our communities safe and New Zealand going.

To find out more please visit the  
Ministry of Health website.

