

COVID-19 Rapid Antigen Information for patients

**Frequently Asked Questions:**

***What are the symptoms of COVID-19?***

Symptoms can vary from person to person and in different age groups. Symptoms may take up to 14 days to appear after exposure to COVID-19. Some of the more common symptoms include cough, fever, headache, runny nose or nasal congestion, sore throat, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing. The severity of COVID-19 symptoms can range from mild to severe and in some cases can even lead to death.

***What should I do if I have symptoms?***

Pharmacies cannot provide testing to patients that have symptoms. Please complete the Nova Scotia Screening Assessment Tool and if directed, book a test here: <https://covid-self-assessment.novascotia.ca/en> If you do not have access to the online assessment, call 811.

***Why do I have to pay for the test?***

The government of Nova Scotia provides COVID testing for Public Health reasons, but not for travel purposes. If you have symptoms and require a test, please contact 811 or visit the website: <https://covid-self-assessment.novascotia.ca/en> for more information on how you can get tested. The pharmacy must purchase the tests, equipment, PPE, and utilize their own staff to administer the test and issue test results.

***What are the age restrictions for testing?***

Pharmacy professionals can conduct tests in patients age 2 and up. Please check with the pharmacy to confirm if there are any age restrictions for the specific test that they are using.

***Where can I find information about testing requirements for my travel destination?*** Information regarding testing requirements for destination countries can be located here: <https://www.iatatravelcentre.com/world.php>

Requirements for travel are changing frequently and each destination has different requirements for accepted testing modalities. It is the responsibility of the traveler to check the entry requirements of their destination. Pharmacies are not able to offer advice surrounding travel COVID-19 testing requirements at this time.

# What tests are available and how is it administered?

# The tests available at each pharmacy may vary. Most will be using Rapid Antigen COVID-19 tests. Some may also have rapid PCR tests. Please check the country entry requirements at the link above.

# What should I bring to the test?

# Patients are required to wear a mask. Bring your health card from a Canadian province or territory if applicable, along with photo ID. If you are an international visitor, bring a passport and/or other form of photo identification.

# What is an antigen?

An antigen is a specific protein on a virus’ surface; the presence of antigens may indicate that you have an active COVID- 19 infection.

# How is the COVID-19 rapid antigen test administered?

You will be brought in to our private counseling room and will be asked to take a seat. You will need to recline your head to 70 degrees and a swab will be inserted. The test involves a shallow nasal swab. This is different from the deeper nasopharyngeal swab used at primary assessment centers and pop-up clinics. This procedure will use a shallow swab in each nostril. The test results will take approximately 15-20 minutes.

# Is the test painful? Will I have any side effects?

The COVID-19 rapid antigen test is not painful, but some discomfort may be felt during the nasal swab. There is generally no side effects after the test, however your nose may be slightly irritated or you may experience slight bleeding from the nose.

# What happens if I have a positive test?

If your COVID-19 rapid antigen test comes back positive, you will be required to self-isolate and have a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test completed through a public health assessment center.

# Am I able to receive a COVID-19 rapid antigen test if I have had COVID-19 infection?

In general, individuals who have previously been infected with and recovered from COVID-19 in the last 90 days, should not undergo repeat testing/antigen screening, unless otherwise directed by local public health or their health care provider as per their symptom and exposure history. Individuals that have had Covid-19 infection in the last 90 days are more likely to have false positives. However, if a test is required for the purpose of travel, and the patient has recovered, they may receive the test.

# Am I able to receive a COVID-19 rapid antigen test if I have had the COVID-19 vaccine?

Absolutely. There is no impact from COVID-19 vaccination on the rapid antigen test. No vaccine is 100% effective therefore regular testing is recommended for all Nova Scotians, regardless of vaccine status.

**Are rapid antigen tests accurate?**

Rapid antigen tests are less sensitive than lab-based polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests. Rapid antigen tests may produce some false negative test results (i.e. a result that indicates the individual is not infected with COVID-19 when in fact they are), and some false positive test results (i.e. a result that indicates the individual is infected with COVID-19 in fact they are not). Results should be interpreted with caution, and employees should continue to adhere to fundamental public health measures, such as symptom screening, physical distancing, masking, frequent hand washing, and use of PPE where appropriate.

***If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to ask our pharmacy staff for more information.***