

Rapid antigen testing

Guidance for critical workers during Phase Two of our Omicron response



February 2022

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FOR MORE INFORMATION
Please visit www.health.govt.nz

Introduction

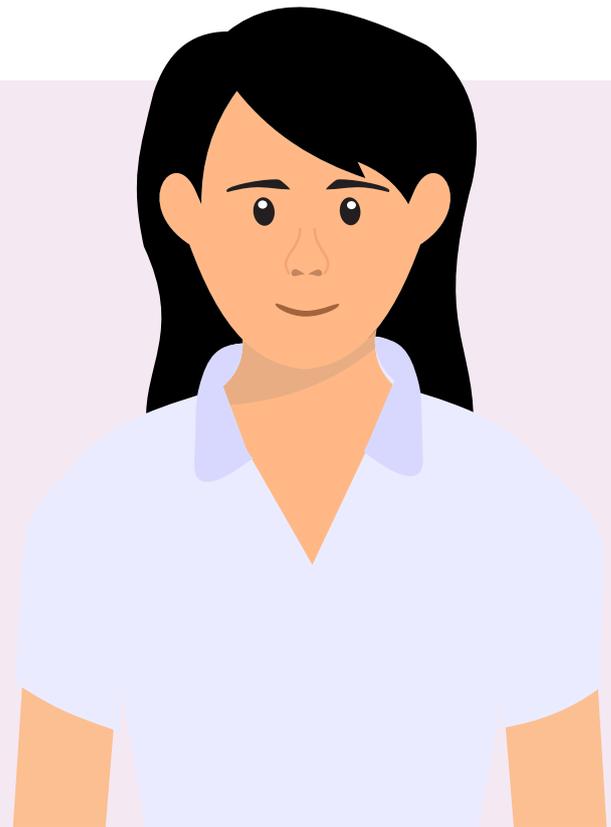
Testing is part of a suite of tools used to protect New Zealanders and to help respond to COVID-19 in our communities.

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

For a RAT test, 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 an 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 phases for response to Omicron, the isolation time frames and rules for contacts will change. That is due to New Zealand now adopting the COVID-19 Protection Framework.

The timeframes for contacts are still being considered. This guide will be updated once the day requirements are finalised.

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)**.

It will come into effect when the country moves to Phase Two of the Omicron strategy. The scheme allows critical workers to be exempted from health orders requiring them to isolate due to being close contacts if they follow certain public health rules. More information is available at business.govt.nz.

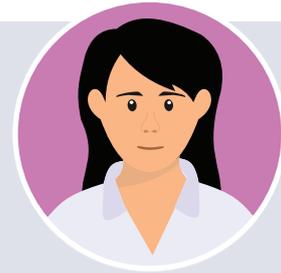
Critical services



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 currently three models for accessing RATs by critical worker depending on your employer.

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. This is not an extensive list.

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

Model three: Supports work sites which may have a large number of contacts as a result of a case. The local DHB and Public Health Unit will work with the site to supply a quantity of RATs directly to the site.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please visit www.health.govt.nz

Model one: Centralised distribution accessed through employer

Those who are eligible for the **Close Contact Exemption Scheme** will need to follow the below steps to register and access RATs. Some organisations are managing distribution themselves.

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.

Process for Critical Workers (Phase 2)



If you self-identify as a close contact, for example through the **NZCOVID Tracer app** or by monitoring locations of interest, please use the relevant link from the locations of interest webpage to **record your visit here** or call **Healthline on 0800 358 5453**.

If the location where you had a contact with a COVID-19 case isn't available on the locations of interest list, please call **Healthline on 0800 358 5453**.

After being confirmed as a close contact you will receive a text message from the Contact Tracing Team for verification purposes. A NZCOVID Tracer Location Alert or Bluetooth Alert can also be used for verification purposes.

- 1 **Step one:** You need to contact your employer who will confirm whether you are eligible for the scheme.
- 2 **Step two:** Your employer will work with you to ensure you get access to RATs. This may be done by collecting from a site they have setup, or it may be couriered to you directly.
- 3 **Step three :** If you are visiting a collection point, make sure the pickup is contactless and preferably outdoors. As you are still considered a close contact, you will need to follow the advice given by your employer.

If you need someone to collect the kits on your behalf then you will need to confirm with your employer what verification is required.

- 4 **Step four:** You can take your kits home with you. As a critical worker you need to make sure you test before each work day/shift. After testing you will 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. 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 and get a PCR test. You **must not** continue using RATs and attending work.
- You should confirm with your employer when would be the best time to do the test each day.
- There is support available on **0800 222 478**, at the **Ministry of Health website** and at **business.govt.nz** to help if you need more information.

Model two: Decentralised distribution accessed through Collection Sites

Those who are eligible for the **Close Contact Exemption Scheme** will need to follow the below steps to register and access RATs.

Process for Critical Workers (Phase 2)



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If the location where you had a contact with a COVID-19 case isn't available on the locations of interest list, please call **Healthline on 0800 358 5453**.

After being confirmed as a close contact you will receive a text message from the Contact Tracing Team for verification purposes. A NZCOVID Tracer Location Alert or Bluetooth Alert can also be used for verification purposes.

- 1 **Step one:** You need to contact your employer. They will confirm whether you are eligible for the scheme. They will give you two letters. The first is a letter confirming your business as registered with the **Critical Services Register**. The second is a **Critical Worker Authorisation Letter** from your employer.
- 2 **Step two:** You can find a link to access the **Rapid Antigen Test Order Form** on the Ministry of Health Website. You must 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:** You will need to visit a Collection Site to pickup your RAT kits. You can find out where they are located **here on healthpoint**.
- 4 **Step four:** At the Collection Site, someone will to confirm/verify the following with you:
 - Letter from the Critical Services Register
 - Critical worker authorisation letter (from your employer)
 - Personal ID (e.g. Driver's Licence)
 - Text message confirming you are a close contact
 - Vaccine Pass

If you are unable to collect the RATs yourself, someone can collect on your behalf. They need to bring all of the workers information and order number for verification purposes. This includes:

 - Letter from the Critical Services Register
 - Critical worker authorisation letter (from their employer)
 - Personal ID (e.g. their own Driver's Licence)
 - Text message confirming them as a close contact (this can be a screenshot or photo)
 - Vaccine pass (their own)
- 5 **Step five:** You can take your kits home with you. As a critical worker you need to make sure you test before each work day/shift. After testing you will 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 A decision tree on what to do after you get your result is **available here**.

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Model three: Decentralised distribution accessed through employer

Those who are eligible for the **Close Contact Exemption Scheme** will need to follow the below steps to register and access RATs. Some organisations are managing distribution themselves.

In some cases there may be large number of contacts at a specific work site/location. Rather than getting all employees to follow model two, it will be easier for the local DHB and Public Health Unit (PHU) to work directly with the employer and supply in bulk a quantity of RATs to cover all workers.

Process for Critical Workers (Phase 2)



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If the location where you had a contact with a COVID-19 case isn't available on the locations of interest list, please call **Healthline on 0800 358 5453**.

After being confirmed as a close contact you will receive a text message from the Contact Tracing Team for verification purposes. A NZCOVID Tracer Location Alert or Bluetooth Alert can also be used for verification purposes.

- 1 **Step one:** You need to contact your employer who will confirm whether you are eligible for the scheme. If multiple contacts from the same setting/site (e.g. a contact centre shift) are identified, your employer will contact the local DHB and PHU and work with them to support managing the entire group of workers.
- 2 **Step two:** Your employer will work with you to ensure you get access to RATs. This may be done by collecting from a site they have setup, or it may be couriered to you directly.
- 3 **Step three :** If you are visiting a collection point, make sure the pickup is contactless and preferably outdoors. As you are still considered a close contact, you will need to follow the advice given by your employer.

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COVID-19

Rapid Antigen Testing Guide

Most rapid antigen testing kits follow these principles, but may differ slightly so please be sure to follow the instructions provided by kit provider.

Collecting your sample



1 Remove a nasal swab from the pouch.



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



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



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

Testing your sample



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



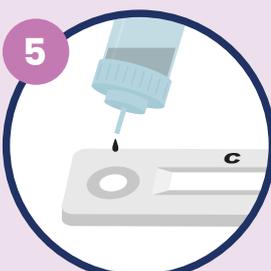
2 Place the swab into the extraction vial. Rotate the swab vigorously at least 5 times.



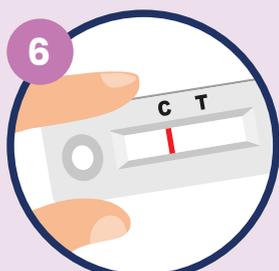
3 Remove the swab by rotating the swab against the vial, while squeezing the sides to release the liquid from the swab.



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



5 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.



6 Please check on the kit instructions and follow the confirmed time to check for your test result. This varies depending on the kit so please check with your pharmacy staff member if unsure.

READ YOUR RESULT

Not detected

One line next to the **C** indicates the virus is not detected.



Detected

Two lines, one next to **C** and one next to **T**, even faint lines indicate the virus is detected.



Failed/Invalid Result

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



TO FIND OUT MORE

Please visit www.health.govt.nz

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

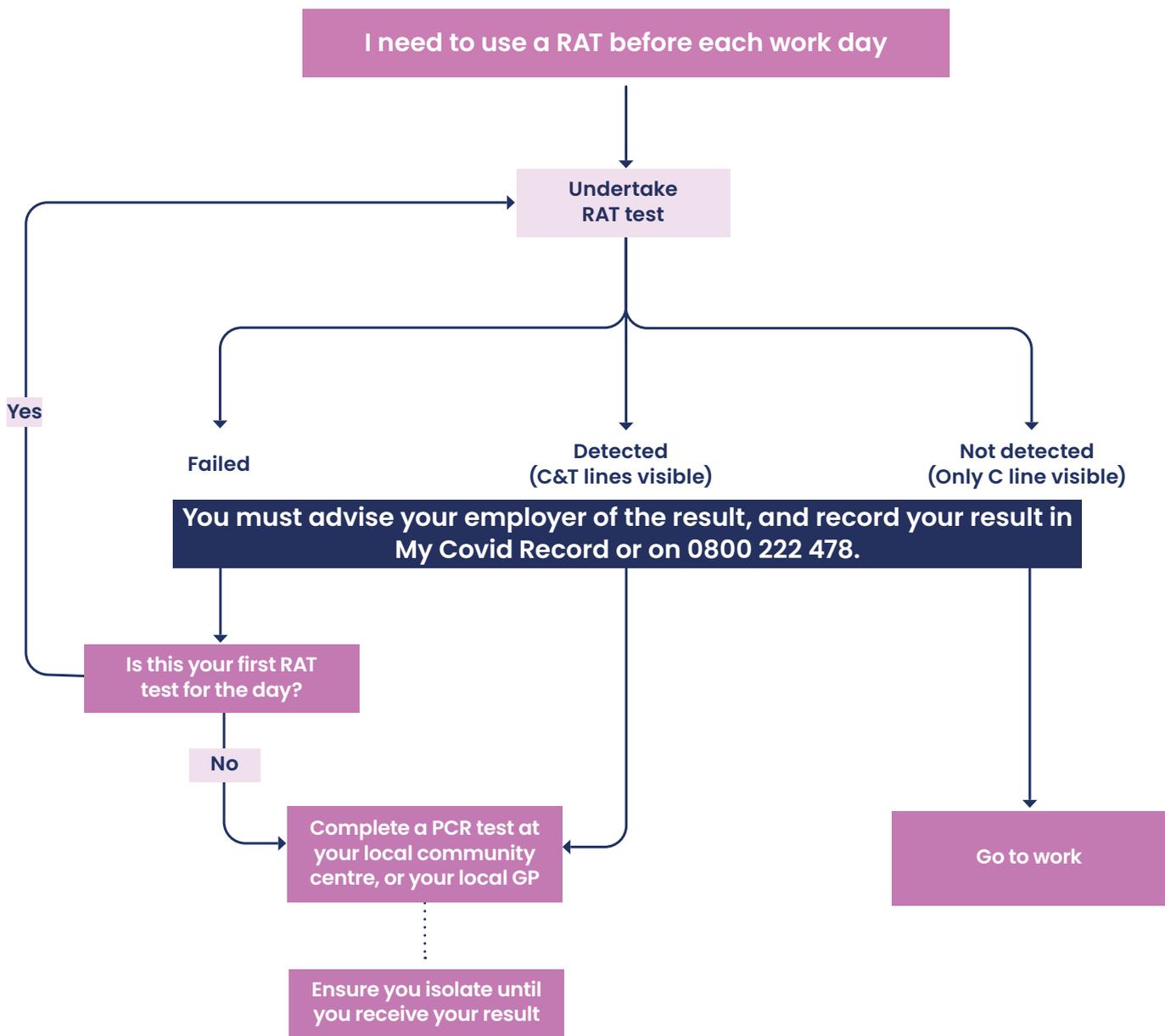
Not detected
One line next to the **C** indicates the virus is not detected.



Detected
Two lines, one next to **C** and one next to **T**, even faint lines indicate the virus is detected.



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



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Useful information

More manufacturers and kits are being reviewed and approved. Below is a snapshot of the kits approved by 10 February 2022. We recommend searching on the Ministry of Health website (keywords rapid antigen testing) to see the latest information. There are several links below with additional information.

Ministry of Health – Rapid antigen testing – this page will be updated regularly with new information. You can also find video demonstrations for the approved test kits on this link.

<https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-health-advice-public/assessment-and-testing-covid-19/rapid-antigen-testing#general>

Interim infection prevention and control guidance for the supervision of rapid antigen screening test for Covid-19 in pharmacies:

<https://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/pages/interim-infection-prevention-and-control-guidance-for-the-supervision-of-rapid-antigen-screening-test-for-covid-19-in-pharmacies-14dec21.pdf>

Rapid Antigen Testing Guidelines for community providers:

<https://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/pages/moh0025-rat-community-guide-v12.pdf>

Guidance for people who have tested positive for Covid-19 Cases:

https://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/pages/guidance_for_cases_at_home_-_any_vaccination_status_1_feb.pdf

Information for community if they have had a PCR Test:

https://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/pages/you_just_got_tested_information_sheet_-_30_aug_2021.pdf

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please visit www.health.govt.nz

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](#).

