

Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs) Guide for General Practices



Rapid Antigen Tests

Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs) are rapid diagnostic tests used to detect the presence of COVID-19. In recent months, RATs have become a critical tool for identifying positive COVID-19 cases throughout the community.

RATs are easy and safe to use, low cost and return results in minutes.

Frequent rapid antigen testing (2-3 times a week) can identify COVID-19 infections in people who do not have symptoms which can stop transmission and prevent large outbreaks.

Frequent testing may also boost employee confidence when undertaking in-person work.

WQPHN are supplying RATs to remote General Practices and AICCHs to ensure that the primary health care workforce is able to continue working and/or return to work as soon as possible. Supply and funding for RATs is limited and practices will be provided with an allocation until the supply is depleted.

Who is eligible for RATs

RATs provided to General Practice by WQPHN are to be used exclusively by staff within the Practice.

It is important to note that any RATs supplied by WQPHN are **not** to be distributed to family members or patients of the practice.

RAT testing program

The RACGP advises that practices may choose to implement a rapid antigen testing program to support business continuity and patient and team member safety.

Introduction of such a program should be documented as part of a COVID Safe Plan and should consider:

- The frequency of testing
- The logistics of at-work and pre-work screening
- How results are collected and documented
- How a practice will manage a positive result
- The legal requirements relating to data collection and relevant use of private health data

Critically Essential Worker Direction

Health Directions released in December identified the classification of Critically Essential Workers to ensure that critical work and supply can continue. General Practices staff fall within the definition.

The Direction provides guidance in relation to:

- The isolation/quarantine of COVID positive close contacts of critically essential workers
- The use and supply of RATs by the employer.

Critically Essential Worker Direction (continued)

At the time of writing, the below are key features of the [Critically Essential Worker](#) Directive. (See [Isolation for Diagnosed Cases of COVID-19 and Management of Close Contacts Directive](#)).

1. If an employer determines that a close contact is a critically essential worker, then that person is permitted to leave quarantine to perform their job if they:
 - Have no COVID-19 symptoms
 - Are vaccinated with two doses of a vaccine and, if eligible, a booster shot.
 - The employee must consent to return to work
2. This does not apply to someone who has COVID-19. Anyone who has COVID-19 is required to isolate for 7 days.
3. Critically essential workers who are close contacts must be tested for COVID-19 via a RAT on:
 - Their first day of work (before starting their shift); and then
 - On every second day after that, until and including day 6 of their quarantine period.

Note: A critically essential worker's quarantine period is likely to have commenced prior to their first day back at work, therefore day 6 of their quarantine period does not necessarily fall on their 6th day back at work.

4. The employer must supply the RATs that are needed.
5. If, at any time, critically essential workers develop COVID-19 symptoms they must return to quarantine and not return to work. They must get tested and stay in quarantine until they receive a negative result, and their symptoms resolve.

Source:

Australian Government. (2022, January 6). COVID-19 rapid antigen tests for business owners. Retrieved from business.gov.au: <https://business.gov.au/risk-management/emergency-management/coronavirus-information-and-support-for-business/covid-19-rapid-antigen-tests-for-business-owners>

Queensland Government. (2022, January 24). Critically Essential Worker requirements. Retrieved from Queensland Government: <https://www.qld.gov.au/health/conditions/health-alerts/coronavirus-covid-19/current-status/public-health-directions/confirmed-cases-and-close-contacts/critically-essential-worker-requirements>

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners. (2022, January 24). Coronavirus (COVID-19) Information for GPs. Retrieved January 25, 2022, from The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners: <https://www.racgp.org.au/coronavirus#update12>