



Issue date: 23 February 2022

## COVID-19 – Rapid Antigen Testing Protocol – Society Members and MVRO Employees + Volunteers.

### Introduction

A Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) is a **screening** test and a quick way to detect COVID-19.

A standard polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test is a **diagnostic test** and can confirm if someone has COVID-19.

Rapid antigen tests can pick up the COVID-19 virus very early in the infection, sometimes before symptoms appear. A rapid antigen test is less accurate than a standard PCR test. But if you test positive with a rapid antigen test, you should assume you have COVID-19 and isolate. You can obtain a confirmed diagnosis by following up with a PCR test, if you wish.

If you have even mild COVID-19 symptoms, you must have a rapid antigen test, or a PCR test if rapid antigen tests are not available.

**Rapid antigen tests are available for members of the Society, as well as volunteers and employees in the MVRO directorate. They are available at Vinnies Service Centres and/or at local Society locations across NSW as directed by the Regional Director in your area.**

If you need a test and are unsure where to locate one, please contact the local Society support staff in your Region or your Regional Director.

### Definitions

<b>Close Contact</b>	More than 4-hours contact time in a residential/indoor setting with a person with confirmed COVID-19.	
<b>COVID-19 symptoms</b> (any mild symptoms require testing)	Common symptoms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• fever (37.5°C or higher)</li> <li>• cough</li> <li>• sore throat</li> <li>• shortness of breath (difficulty breathing)</li> <li>• runny nose</li> <li>• loss of taste</li> <li>• loss of smell.</li> </ul>	Other reported symptoms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• fatigue</li> <li>• acute blocked nosed (congestion)</li> <li>• muscle pain</li> <li>• joint pain</li> <li>• headache</li> <li>• diarrhoea</li> <li>• nausea/vomiting</li> <li>• loss of appetite.</li> </ul>
<b>Isolation</b>	This means you must self-isolate for seven full 24-hour periods from the time you: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• last had contact with the COVID-19 positive person</li> <li>• had a test for COVID-19 which returned a positive result (you may only leave isolation after 7 days if you have been asymptomatic for the final 24 hours of isolation).</li> </ul>	
<b>PCR Test</b>	Polymerase chain reaction is a nasal swab test to detect genetic material from a specific organism, such as a virus. The test detects the presence of a virus if you have the virus at the time of the test. It is a test of diagnosis.	

<b>Rapid Antigen Test</b>	Rapid antigen tests use a nasal swab or saliva sample to test for the presence of the virus that causes COVID-19. You can easily perform the test at home and should get your results within 15 minutes.
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## When to use a Rapid Antigen Tests in relation to Society work:

A rapid antigen test should be used by members, MVRO staff or volunteers when:

- we become aware that a person we assist and have had recent contact with has a **confirmed** (through a rapid antigen test or PCR test) COVID-19 diagnosis
- we become aware that a person we assist and have had recent contact with is a **close contact** of a person with a confirmed COVID-19 diagnosis
- there is believed to have been or a high likelihood of **transmission of COVID-19 having occurred during Society activities** (such as home visitation) and conducting a rapid antigen test will assist in managing our response to the potential COVID-19 exposure
- a member, volunteer or employee becomes **symptomatic in the workplace**
- a member, volunteer or employee has had close/social contact with someone who has COVID-19 and the Society has asked them to test before returning to Society work/activities
- a member, volunteer or employee is returning to work between 7 and 10 days after getting a positive result.

If a member, volunteer or employee returns **one** positive rapid antigen test they are confirmed as COVID positive. They must self-isolate for seven (7) days from the day they were tested. They can only leave self-isolation after seven (7) days and if they have not had symptoms for 24 hours, even if those symptoms are mild.

Everyone is required to comply with the NSW Health testing and isolation requirements.

Note that the rapid antigen tests available for members, volunteers and employees in MVRO should not generally be used for the people we assist. [Concession card holders can be supported to access free tests from local providers.](#)

## Results

### Positive rapid antigen test result?

#### **If you have symptoms and have obtained a positive rapid antigen test result:**

- you are confirmed as having COVID-19
- you are not required to get a PCR (see below for when to get a PCR test)
- you must self-isolate for 7 days from your test result
- only leave isolation at the end of 7 days if you have been asymptomatic for 24 hours
- report all positive rapid antigen tests to your manager who will report to the Safety team.

#### **If you are a close contact (with or without symptoms) and you have obtained a positive rapid antigen test result:**

- you are confirmed as having COVID-19
- you are not required to get a PCR (see below for when to get a PCR test)
- you must self-isolate for 7 days from your test result
- only leave isolation at the end of 7 days only if you have been asymptomatic for 24 hours.

**If you are asymptomatic (and not a close contact)** but have obtained a positive rapid antigen test result:

- you should take another rapid antigen test in 24 hours or have a PCR test
- isolate while you wait for the PCR result.

### Negative rapid antigen test result?

**If you are symptomatic (and/or a close contact) and have obtained a negative rapid antigen test result:**

- you should take another rapid antigen test in 24 hours or have a PCR test
- isolate while you wait for the PCR result
- if you are a close contact you need to isolate for 7 days.

**If you are asymptomatic (and a close contact) and have obtained a negative rapid antigen test result:**

- conduct a RAT as soon as possible
- monitor for symptoms, test, and isolate for 7 days
- only leave isolation if you have been asymptomatic for 24 hours
- continue to monitor for symptoms for a total 14 days from exposure.

**If you are asymptomatic (and not a close contact) and have obtained a negative rapid antigen test result:**

- no further tests are required
- monitor for symptoms and have a PCR test if symptoms develop.

### When to get a PCR test

You should get a standard PCR test at a COVID-19 testing clinic in NSW if you:

- have a positive rapid antigen test result and are:
  - o asymptomatic and are not a close contact
  - o pregnant (more than 20 weeks gestation)
  - o Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, Pacific Islander
  - o unvaccinated (16 years and older)
  - o immunosuppressed
  - o a worker, resident, patient, or client in a high risk setting where there is not a current confirmed outbreak (health care, aged care and disability care)
  - o asked to by a registered medical practitioner
- have done a rapid antigen test and have a negative result (if you are symptomatic and/or a close contact)
- have even mild COVID-19 symptoms, but cannot obtain a rapid antigen test
- have been told to get a test by NSW Health or another healthcare practitioner.

### Transport, storage, and disposal

This will vary according to information provided with the test instructions. Some tests come with a plastic bag to place the contents of the test into (including the swab). This bag is then placed into another bag for disposal with the household rubbish.

If no bags are provided you can place the used items from the test into a small plastic bag that can be sealed. This bag should be put into another bag that can be sealed and disposed of in the household rubbish.

Wash your hands carefully after completing the test and disposing of the test kit contents.

Rapid antigen testing kits are extremely fragile and temperature sensitive. Rapid antigen kits should be stored in a dry and dark area away from direct sunlight or exposure to extreme temperatures, both hot and cold, ideally between 7°C to 25°C.

## Result Interpretation

Negative Result	Positive Result
- a bold or faint control line <i>only</i> is a <b>NEGATIVE</b> result	- a second line even if faint is a <b>POSITIVE</b> result
 <b>C</b> ————— Control (C) <b>T</b> ————— Test (T)	 <b>C</b> <b>T</b>

## Testing Matrix

Test result	Symptoms	Exposure risk	Next step
Positive result	Symptoms	Known or unknown contact	You are a confirmed case, follow the advice for <a href="#">people testing positive for COVID-19</a>
Positive result	+/- symptoms	Known high risk or household contact	You are a confirmed case, follow the advice for <a href="#">people testing positive for COVID-19</a>
Positive result	asymptomatic	No known contact	You may be a case, take another rapid antigen test in 24 hours or have a PCR test
Negative result	Symptoms	Any exposure risk including no known contact	You may be a case, take another rapid antigen test in 24 hours or have a PCR test If you are a known high risk or household contact, isolate for 7 days
Negative result	asymptomatic	No known contact	Continue to monitor for symptoms but you do not need to isolate unless symptoms appear or you become a close contact