



Education

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December 21, 2021

TO: Parents/Caregivers

The Government of Manitoba is making rapid antigen test kits available to students in Kindergarten to Grade 6 who attend school in Manitoba in an effort to provide peace of mind to parents as classes resume in January.

Please note: your child's participation in this rapid antigen testing is voluntary. Students are not required to participate in order to return to the classroom.

While vaccination, mask use and reducing contacts are still the best tools for managing the spread of COVID-19, making rapid tests available will help identify cases as students return to school.

It also is important to remember we all need to continue to follow public health guidance that has been effective in keeping the pandemic under control. This includes staying home when sick, getting tested if you have symptoms, washing your hands frequently and wearing a face covering as required. Vaccination remains the most effective protection against the virus and its variants. Ensuring that children and youth are vaccinated will provide a strong level of protection and help to keep schools open and as safe as possible.

Please read the important information below prior to using the rapid antigen test kit.

When to Use the Rapid Antigen Screening Kit:

- For families who participate, it is recommended that parents/caregivers conduct one test every three to four days with their child, beginning the day they receive their test kit and continuing until all five tests have been used. If parents are not able to get a testing kit before the break, testing can also begin in January. One test is to be completed every three to four days, continuing until all five tests are used. Both approaches support a safe return to classes.
- Rapid antigen screening test kits are only to be used when a child is asymptomatic (i.e. does not have any symptoms of COVID-19 and has not had any exposure to a confirmed case of COVID-19).
- Anyone with symptoms or who is identified as a close contact of a case should still get PCR testing at a provincial testing site. Rapid antigen tests should not be used as a substitute for PCR tests for people with symptoms or for people who are close contacts of cases.
- Under provincial public health orders, these tests cannot be used for youth age 12 to 17 who are being tested to play sports. Those tests must be reviewed and confirmed by a pharmacist.
- When you receive the kit, store it at room temperature (not in the fridge or freezer) and away from direct sunlight.

Using the Take-Home Rapid Antigen Test Kit:

- The rapid antigen test should be performed using anterior nasal swabbing (per the package insert, as approved by Health Canada).
- Parents/caregivers may administer the tests if they volunteer to participate.
- Please follow the instructions provided with this letter.
- **Important note:** Parents or caregivers may choose to administer this test on children who may need help (i.e., younger children).

What to do after your test:

- You will know the outcome of the test within 15 minutes. If test results conducted so far are negative, your child may attend school as usual. Even if your child tests negative, they should continue to follow to all public health guidance, such as physical distancing and masking.
- A positive result on a rapid antigen test is considered a preliminary positive and a follow-up PCR test is necessary- taken at a provincial testing site, ideally within 48 hours. Children should isolate themselves until the result of the PCR test is known. If the PCR test is positive, public health officials will provide further direction.

Thank you.

Original signed by

Christina Moody
Assistant Deputy Minister
Manitoba Education

Enclosure

- c. Honourable Cliff Cullen, Minister of Education
Dana Rudy, Deputy Minister or Education