COVID-19

RAPID ANTIGEN TESTING OPERATIONAL GUIDANCE FOR GENERAL PRACTICE

This guide describes the operational requirements for supervising or Rapid Antigen Testing (RATs), both unsupervised and supervised, at Phase 3 of the Omicron Public Health Response Plan.
In Phase 3 RATs become the primary testing optional and a positive RAT does not need to be confirmed with a PCR test. The Close Contact Exemption Scheme (CCES) will be used in phase 3 for asymptomatic critical workers who are household contacts, using RATs.

TESTING PRINCIPLES
Testing purpose:

- Test to treat / manage – eg. Antivirals; public health management, ensuring timely access to care and support
- Test to return/continue activity (e.g. critical HCW).

The testing modality is appropriate to the person and their household/ whaanau and their circumstances*

(*People where a self-administered RAT test may be inappropriate, then a supervised RAT or a PCR test is preferred (e.g. if likely to have difficulty uploading result into the system, so the person can access care and support)).

The following table outlines the testing plan for asymptomatic and symptomatic persons:

Cohort	Asymptomatic, not a contact	Asymptomatic household contact	Symptomatic
General population	No test	Household Contacts test when symptoms develop or when case reaches day 3 and day 10	RAT immediately. Repeat if negative result but symptoms persist. PCR by clinical discretion
Additional or alternative testing for specific cohorts (if blank, general population testing applies)			
Healthcare and emergency service workforce	PCR/RAT surveillance testing of select groups or in specific circumstances	May use daily RAT to work as part of 'Close Contact Exemption Scheme	
Critical service workforce		May use daily RAT to work as part of 'Close Contact Exemption Scheme	
Priority populations		RAT also available through community provider	RAT also available through community provider

FUNDING AND RECORDING OF SUPERVISED TEST RESULTS
General practice is being provided with the opportunity to opt into the provision of supervised RATs and distribution of unsupervised RATs at their facility (this is not a requirement). For provision of these services, the following arrangements will be put in place:

- Contractual arrangement will be made with PHOs for payments to general practices that have opted into the provision of supervised/unsupervised RATs. For the distribution of RATs, a fee will be paid of $.50 plus GST per unsupervised RAT and $45 plus GST per Supervised RATs.
- The Ministry of Health will fund DHBs to arrange local payment mechanisms. This may include PHOs.
- General practices will need to enter data on persons undertaking a supervised RAT or receiving an unsupervised test in HealthLink. Select *Supervised Rapid Antigen Testing* which will open the page where the information is entered. Data within HealthLink will be utilised to determine how many supervised/unsupervised RATs have been made available to eligible members of the public.

SUPERVISED RATS IN GENERAL PRACTICE
A supervised test should be conducted where a person is symptomatic, and meets the requirements of the testing plan. A positive RAT result can be treated as a case and managed accordingly. A positive result does not require a PCR test as confirmation (see above). When a test result is entered in HealthLink, the patient will receive an automated text message with their result and details of the next steps.

It will be at the discretion of the general practice how they manage their patients and clinical examinations, regarding COVID-19 symptomatic patients and if a patient remains at the clinic until the RAT result can be provided to them. Please refer to the **Guidance for the Supervision of Rapid Antigen Testing** on the Ministry of Health website on the provision of this service.

UNSUPERVISED RATS
An asymptomatic critical worker who is a household contact can, under the Close Contact Exemption Scheme, be supplied with unsupervised RATs (it is recommended to provide eight tests to cover the whole isolation period) to take away and perform the test themselves in conjunction with the document on how to take a RAT. For your reference, the links are provided here for information on: **How to take a RAT**, **Guidance for Critical Workers** and the **Close Contact Exemption Scheme** .

RATs can be continued to be ordered through the Ministry of Health PPE portal.
Any queries relating to HealthLink and IT support cand be directed to HealthLink service desk on 0800 288 887
If you have any queries regarding information contained in this guidance, please email: COVID-19testing@health.govt.nz**, with "GP query" in the heading.**