

## Public Access to Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs) through High Priority Community (HPC) Lead Agencies Questions and Answers

### Supply/Distribution of Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs)

**1. When will HPC lead agencies be receiving RATs? What is the delivery schedule moving forward?**

Initial shipments have been made to HPC lead agencies and all agencies will have RATs at their sites by February 9<sup>th</sup> when the program is announced.

The Province will conduct ongoing shipments to HPC lead agencies every two weeks with the second shipment arriving the week of February 14, 2022. Any changes to the order size should be communicated to [alison.kernoghan@ontario.ca](mailto:alison.kernoghan@ontario.ca) by the Thursday before the next shipping week (e.g. by February 10, 2022).

**2. What are the test specs?**

The province will look to use 5-packs of BTNX Rapid Response for the duration of this program, pending available supply.

KIT	# Tests/Kit	5	
	Weight of 1 Kit	0.25 lbs	
	Size of 1 Kit	20 x 9 x 3 cm	
CARTON	# Kits/ Carton	108	
	Carton Weight	25 lbs	
	Carton Size	64 x 38 x 31 cm	
PALLET	# Cartons/ Pallet	18	
	# Kits/ Pallet	1944	
	# Tests/ Pallet	9720	
	Pallet Weight	685 lbs	
	Pallet Size	121	106 x 142 cm

**3. What temperature should RATs be stored?**

Test should be stored and transported between **2-30°C** (unused tests should not be allowed to freeze).

**4. What happens if tests are exposed to the cold during the shipping process?**

RATs will not be impacted by a short-term exposure to the cold.

Any recipient of RATs is instructed to **bring the tests inside for storage immediately following shipment to maintain product integrity**. HPC agencies should not be leaving the shipments outside for any period of time once they are delivered.

If tests are exposed to the cold, please ensure that they are brought up to room temperature prior to use.

**5. Do the rapid tests have an expiration date?**

Rapid tests have a shelf-life of 12-24 months depending on test type. It is not expected that tests will expire between the time of test distribution and individual use through the time-limited public access program. Individuals should refer to the expiration date within the test kit for specific details related to test expiration.

The BTNX Rapid Response tests shelf life is 24 months.

**6. What do we do with any unused test kits?**

If you are no longer participating in the program, you are encouraged to distribute any remaining test kits received through the program before discontinuing participation.

**7. Would lead agencies be able to enlist the support of their partners for distribution?**

Yes, HPC lead agencies have the flexibility to determine the distribution approach that works for them, provided they are distributing to an eligible population and in alignment with the safe transportation and storage of test kits.

**8. Can the kits be distributed without requiring personal health information?**

Yes. There is no requirement for individuals distributing tests to request any personal health information of the individuals receiving the test.

**9. Who can receive rapid antigen tests through HPC lead agencies?**

High Priority Community Lead Agencies will distribute rapid antigen tests (2 or 5 tests/package) using an approach that serves their patient/target population (e.g. appointment-based, pick-up vs. drop-off, etc.).

**10. How many RATs should be given per family?**

HPC lead agencies will be able to provide one box per family and, with discretion, may provide additional boxes depending on individual circumstances (e.g., multi-generational home, immune-compromised family member etc.).

***Program Parameters***

**11. What if someone inquires about accessing larger volumes of tests for their business?**

Any organization that is open and requires staff on site is eligible for free access to rapid antigen tests through the Provincial Antigen Screening Program. Individuals interested in accessing tests for their businesses can be directed to: [covid-19.Ontario.ca/provincial-antigen-screening-program](https://covid-19.ontario.ca/provincial-antigen-screening-program)

The province mitigated short-term supply constraints from mid-December to mid-January, but as supply has stabilized, Ontario is processing the backlog of orders and resuming regular shipments through this program.

**12. Can I provide test kits that we have received through the program to my employees?**

The test kits provided through the program are not to be used to screen employees coming to the workplace. Agencies are free to participate in the [Provincial Antigen Screening Program](#) to access rapid antigen test kits to screen employees.

**13. How long will rapid antigen tests be available for distribution through HPC lead agencies?**

The program will last for a minimum of 8 weeks. HPC lead agencies will continue to receive regular shipments of RATs to distribute through their communities for the duration of the program.

**14. What if someone from the general public who is not part of the agency reach out is seeking a test?**

Anyone from the general public can access test kits at participating grocery and pharmacy retail locations. More information on how to access tests through participating retailers, as well as participating retailer locations can be found by visiting the Ontario.ca website and following the links provided to visit participating retailer websites.

***Use of RATs***

**15. How are rapid antigen tests currently being used?**

For the general public, rapid antigen tests can be used for the following:

- For people with symptoms consistent with COVID-19.
- For frequent, routine asymptomatic screening.
- While one-off testing (e.g. before social gathering) by people not experiencing COVID-19 symptoms and without a known exposure is generally not recommended. If a test is used in this way, tests should be completed as close to the event as possible (e.g. ideally within a few hours of the event) and know that a negative result could be a false negative.

**16. What if someone has symptoms? Do they need to be actively screened at the distribution location?**

Every Ontarian has a responsibility to follow public health guidelines and to please stay at home if they are feeling ill or has COVID-19 symptoms; this includes not visiting a distribution location to access rapid antigen tests while symptomatic. Where possible, Ontarians should plan ahead by accessing and keeping rapid antigen tests at home, to use if and when they develop symptoms consistent with COVID-19.

### **17. How does a rapid antigen test work?**

Rapid antigen tests use a nasal swab. The antigen test looks for proteins from the COVID-19 virus. Results are available in about 15 to 20 minutes; at home where the sample is taken and does not require shipping a specimen to a lab for processing.

A rapid antigen test can be performed at home, either by self-swabbing yourself, or by getting someone to help you.

For more information on what the test results mean, see the one-page document on Rapid Antigen Tests that was provided with your test kit.

### **18. How will individuals know how to use a rapid antigen test?**

Individuals that receive a package of rapid antigen tests to complete at home will be provided with instructions that include a link to additional online resources for guidance on how to complete a rapid test, interpret results, as well as isolation directions if they test positive.

Many resources can be found on the Ontario Health website (<https://www.ontariohealth.ca/COVID-19/Health-System-Response-Resources#panbio>), including specific instructions on how to use the BTNX Rapid Response Test on yourself: <https://www.ontariohealth.ca/sites/ontariohealth/files/2022-01/BTNXSelfScreeningInstructions.pdf>

### **19. Can rapid antigen tests be thrown out in the garbage?**

For waste generated from at-home rapid antigen screening the regulatory requirements for managing the hazardous waste under the Environmental Protection Act do not apply. Instead, persons undertaking at-home rapid antigen tests can dispose of the waste with their household trash consistent with municipal by-laws.

### **20. How do we ensure that distributing RATs doesn't impact other preventative measures?**

RATs are an additional tool in response to COVID-19. All communications and public messaging do and should continue to reinforce that use of RATs should not replace other preventative public health measures. For example, the province does not recommend one-off use of RATs to support attendance at a social event.

## ***Public Access Program Communications***

### **21. Are there graphic booklets available on how to use RATs?**

An information document will be provided to all HPC lead agencies ahead of the program launch, and should be offered (hard copy or online link) to every individual who receives

rapid antigen tests through the program. This resource will be available in multiple languages. Additional detailed instructions on using RATs can be found on the Ontario Health website: <https://www.ontariohealth.ca/COVID-19/Health-System-Response-Resources>

### ***Additional Questions***

If you have additional questions about the program, please contact:

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