



Interim Recommendations for Use of SARS-CoV-2 Antigen Tests During COVID-19 Public Health Emergency

October 17, 2020

Purpose

Antigen tests are an important part of the COVID-19 public health emergency response strategy as these tests are relatively inexpensive and can be used at the point-of-care. However, they are generally less sensitive than PCR testing. The New York State Department of Health (DOH) provides these recommendations to support the effective use of antigen tests for different testing situations to ensure the most appropriate interpretation of antigen test results, which is important for accurate clinical and public health management.

Recommended Use

- Use to test individuals when there is an outbreak in a public setting or environment.
- Use to test residents and employees in nursing homes and adult care facilities regardless of outbreak status.
- Congregate facilities include nursing homes, assisted-living facilities, long-term-care facilities, and other health or social facilities such as day programs.
- Congregate settings include schools, colleges, universities and other educational settings, workplaces, and other sites where people gather.
- All antigen test results must be reported to ECLRS.

Considerations When Testing Individuals When There Is an Outbreak In a Public Setting (see attached flow chart for reference):

- If a **symptomatic or asymptomatic** individual has a **positive** antigen test result, **no** confirmatory testing is needed. The individual must be isolated and contact tracing must be initiated immediately.
- If a **symptomatic** individual has a **negative** antigen test result, perform confirmatory laboratory-based RT-PCR immediately and test for other respiratory pathogens. Quarantine until RT-PCR results are obtained and stay home from school or work. If confirmatory laboratory-based RT-PCR is **positive**, continue isolation and immediately initiate contact tracing. If confirmatory laboratory-based RT-PCR is **negative**, discontinue quarantine.
- If an **asymptomatic** individual has a **negative** antigen test result, consider confirmatory laboratory-based RT-PCR test within 48 hours. If RT-PCR test performed, quarantine until results are obtained. If confirmatory laboratory-based RT-PCR is **positive**, isolate and initiate contact tracing immediately. If confirmatory laboratory-based RT-PCR is **negative**, discontinue isolation.

Considerations When Testing Residents and Employees Nursing Homes, Adult Care Facilities and Other Congregate Facilities and Settings (see attached flow chart for reference):

- If a **symptomatic** individual has a **positive** antigen test result, **no** confirmatory testing is needed. The individual must be isolated, and an outbreak response must be initiated immediately.
- If a **symptomatic** individual has a **negative** antigen test result, perform confirmatory laboratory-based RT-PCR immediately and test for other respiratory pathogens. Quarantine until RT-PCR results are obtained. If confirmatory laboratory-based RT-PCR is positive, continue isolation and initiate outbreak response immediately. If confirmatory laboratory-based RT-PCR is negative, discontinue quarantine.
- If an **asymptomatic** individual in a facility where there is an **ongoing outbreak** has a **positive** antigen test result, **no** confirmatory testing is needed. The individual must be isolated, and an outbreak response must be initiated immediately.
If an **asymptomatic** individual in a facility where there is an **ongoing outbreak** has a **negative** antigen test result, serial testing should be continued as described by CMS. See CMS Memo QSO-20-38-NH: <https://www.cms.gov/medicareprovider-enrollment-and-liarule-ifc-cms-3401-ifc-additional-policy-and-regulatory-revisions-response-covid-19>.
- If an **asymptomatic** individual in a facility **without an ongoing outbreak** has a **positive** antigen test result, **perform** confirmatory laboratory-based RT-PCR test within 48 hours. Quarantine pending confirmatory test. If confirmatory laboratory-based RT-PCR is **positive**, continue isolation and initiate outbreak response. If confirmatory laboratory-based RT-PCR is **negative**, discontinue quarantine.
- If an **asymptomatic** individual in a facility **without an ongoing outbreak** has a **negative** antigen test result, Serial testing should be continued as described by CMS. See CMS Memo QSO-20-38-NH: <https://www.cms.gov/medicareprovider-enrollment-and-liarule-ifc-cms-3401-ifc-additional-policy-and-regulatory-revisions-response-covid-19>.