

POLICY BACKGROUND

[Administrative Policy A 1701: COVID-19 Vaccination](#), and its related [Procedure](#), outline the requirement for employees to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19, unless exempt on the basis of a protected legal ground. Those employees who are not fully vaccinated must comply with the [COVID-19 Rapid Testing Program](#).

EMPLOYEE QUESTIONS

What type of rapid testing is permitted? *UPDATED*

Only [Health Canada approved](#) Rapid Tests will be accepted. At-home, third-party provider video-supervised testing is acceptable starting December 1, only if the third-party provider produces a written result that meets the Program's requirements. Employees can identify a pharmacy, or other private provider, of their choice that offers Health Canada approved Rapid Antigen Tests. For your reference, Alberta Health has published a [list](#) of COVID-19 rapid testing third party health service vendors. The City of Edmonton has also created a [list](#) of rapid testing providers in the Edmonton and surrounding region. Employees may optionally reference this list of rapid testing providers in the City. This list is subject to change.

At-home rapid test kits (including those provided free of cost by the Province) may only be used as a follow up test if the employee is asymptomatic and tests positive. Alberta Health Services (AHS) provided PCR tests are not accepted.

Where can I obtain COVID-19 Rapid Testing? *UPDATED*

Only [Health Canada approved](#) Rapid Tests will be accepted. You can attend a pharmacy, or other private provider, of your choice that offers Health Canada approved Rapid Antigen Tests. Alberta Health has published a [list](#) of COVID-19 rapid testing third party health service vendors. You are encouraged to proactively identify several locations near work or home where you may access rapid testing.

The City has also created a [list](#) of rapid testing providers in the Edmonton and surrounding region. Employees may optionally reference this list of rapid testing providers in the City. This list is subject to change.

At-home rapid test kits (including those provided free of cost by the Province) may only be used as a follow up test if the employee is asymptomatic and tests positive. Alberta Health Services (AHS) provided PCR tests are not accepted.

Please note: many providers require advanced booking and do **not** perform rapid antigen testing as a drop-in service. Employees are encouraged to call their provider of choice to discuss their testing protocols. It is recommended that you book your appointments in advance to ensure no disruption in receiving a negative test within the required timeframe.

Why do I need to go for COVID-19 Rapid Testing?

Employees are required to be fully vaccinated by November 15, 2021. Rapid testing is an additional workplace control measure to minimize the hazard of COVID-19 in our workplaces for those employees who have not provided proof they are fully vaccinated.

Do I need to go for COVID-19 Rapid Testing if I am partially vaccinated?

Employees are required to be fully vaccinated by November 15, 2021. If you have only received one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine by October 31, you will be required to go on the COVID-19 Rapid Testing program until you are fully vaccinated (two weeks after receiving your second dose). Please ensure you submit your second dose information as soon as possible after you have received it.

How often do I need to go for COVID-19 Rapid Testing?

A rapid test must be performed within 72 hours of the start of each shift and must be completed by a private provider, such as a pharmacy or lab. For most employees they will need to complete 2 rapid tests each week.

Do I have to pay for the COVID-19 Rapid Testing?

Yes, employees are required to pay for the cost of rapid testing and complete the test on their own time. Employees with an approved exemption will receive direct information regarding payment of rapid testing.

Who do I need to share my COVID-19 Rapid Testing results with?

You will need to share this information with your supervisor (or their designate) using the [Rapid Testing & Pre-Shift Screening Checklist](#). You may also be asked to provide proof of a negative test result at any time during your shift. Rapid testing is a workplace control measure. Leaders and branch management will know whether an employee is on the testing program and will have access to information to ensure that the employee is complying.

What if I miss my COVID-19 Rapid Test?

If you are unable to provide proof of a negative COVID-19 rapid test result within 72 hours of your shift, you cannot work that day and it will be coded as leave without pay. Contact your supervisor as soon as possible and also arrange to attend for a rapid test.

Is COVID-19 Rapid Testing covered under my benefits plan?

Rapid tests can be expensed under the Health Spending Account (HSA) with a “physician’s written order”. A “physician’s written order” can be signed by a pharmacist, nurse, medical doctor, or a dentist.

Why does the City not apply for free rapid test kits from the Province?

Though the cost of the test kits are covered by the Province, there is a cost to the administration of the program. If the City administered a rapid testing program, employees would still be required to pay for the administrative costs of the test and would have less flexibility in when and where they could have their tests performed.

Who can be screened with COVID-19 Rapid Tests?

- Individuals who are asymptomatic (i.e., they have no symptoms)
- Individuals who have no known close contact with a confirmed positive case
- Individuals who have not tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 6 weeks.

If someone has recovered from a COVID-19 infection, how will this impact their COVID-19 Rapid Test results? ***UPDATED***

Recent infection with COVID-19 may interfere with test effectiveness. If an employee has tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 6 weeks, they are not eligible for the rapid testing program and must connect with Disability Management to receive a temporary exemption from the testing requirement. Employees must provide proof of a positive rapid test or PCR test from Alberta Health Services to Disability Management to be granted the exemption. Disability Management will provide direction on pre-shift screening requirements during the 6 week temporary exemption. The exemption expires at the conclusion of six weeks from the positive PCR or rapid test result and the employee will resume the Rapid Testing Program if they have not yet submitted proof of full vaccination.

Please note: the recommended 6 week exemption period for rapid testing after a positive COVID-19 test is specific to rapid antigen testing for asymptomatic screening of COVID-19. This is different than the Alberta Health Services PCR test for diagnostic testing.

What if my COVID-19 Rapid Test comes back positive? *UPDATED*

Positive with No Symptoms

- If you screen positive, you must immediately isolate. Take a second rapid test (which is permitted to be an at-home test) in 24 hours:
 - If negative, isolation can end unless you develop symptoms.
 - If positive, continue isolating.

Positive with Symptoms

- Isolate immediately for 10 days or until symptoms resolve, whichever is longer.
- Book a PCR test only if you meet the [high-risk conditions](#).

Will I get paid if I have to miss work due to a positive Rapid Test?

If you are unable to attend work due to a positive Rapid Test, that shift will be coded as QWP. You must code your time according to the [Compensation and Leave FAQ](#).

What if I get vaccinated and no longer need to be on the COVID-19 Rapid Testing Program?

You will need to submit your vaccination record through the [COVID-19 Vaccination Intake Form](#). Once your submission has been verified and you are confirmed to be fully vaccinated (it has been 2 weeks since your final dose), you will no longer be required to complete rapid testing.

What are Rapid Antigen tests?

Rapid Antigen tests are medical tests that can be performed and processed quickly and more easily than lab-based tests. Rapid screening can help to identify possible COVID-19 infections and may limit the risk of unknown spread; it does not provide a diagnosis of COVID-19.

How are Rapid Antigen tests administered (throat, nose swab, etc.)?

Most Rapid Antigen tests used for asymptomatic COVID-19 screening require nasal swab collection. Samples are processed to produce a positive or negative result.

How long does it typically take to get test results?

Rapid Antigen tests can produce results in approximately 15 minutes.

What does a negative result on a Rapid Antigen test mean?

A negative Rapid Antigen test result does not guarantee that the individual is not infected with COVID-19. Therefore employees are required to continue to adhere to public health

and workplace measures including pre-shift screening, masking, physical distancing and hand hygiene.

Do Rapid Antigen tests screen for variants of concern (VOC)?

Rapid tests will provide a positive result no matter which strain of the virus that causes COVID-19 a person is infected with.

Why are fully vaccinated employees not required to submit proof of negative rapid test results if they can still become infected with COVID-19?

Rapid testing is an additional workplace control measure for those that are not fully vaccinated to identify potential cases of COVID-19 as early as possible and minimize the potential for transmission in our workplaces.

COVID-19 vaccines are effective at preventing most infections, however breakthrough infections are possible. The City has a layered approach to control measures to mitigate the hazard of COVID-19 in our workplaces. Although health experts are still studying breakthrough infections, it has been confirmed that the likelihood of COVID-19 infection is significantly reduced as a result of receiving full vaccination. Therefore, fully vaccinated employees are not required to submit proof of a negative rapid test result, but must continue to perform the pre-shift screening, comply with masking policies, practice physical distancing and stay home if they are sick.

Where can I find information on booking my vaccination?

You can find information on booking your free COVID-19 vaccination [here](#).

People Leader Questions

What if an employee does not go for their COVID-19 Rapid Test as outlined (within 72 hours of the start of their shift)?

An employee who cannot provide proof of a negative COVID-19 Rapid Test cannot work that shift and should be coded as leave without pay. Please ensure the employee understands the requirements of the COVID-19 Rapid Testing Program and the consequences of non-compliance. If they are non-compliant a second time, without reasonable explanation, contact your Labour Relations Consultant for next steps.

Who do I contact to discuss if an employee is not being compliant with the COVID-19 Rapid Testing Program?

Please contact your Labour Relations Consultant.

Does the Rapid Test have to be performed within 72 hours from the start of the shift or does it have to include the entire shift?

The test must be performed within 72 hours of the start of the shift.

How do I track who is on the COVID-19 Rapid Testing Program?

Workforce Safety will provide a report of the employees who must comply with the COVID-19 Rapid Testing Program. People Leaders are required to:

- ensure their employees are using the [COVID-19 Rapid Testing Pre-Shift Screening Checklist](#); and
- Review the proof of negative COVID-19 Rapid Test results, either electronically through the form or in-person, as per your branch's process.

What if an employee tests positive through the COVID-19 Rapid Testing Program?

Positive with No Symptoms

- If the employee screens positive, they must immediately isolate.
- The employee should take a second rapid test (may be an at home rapid test) in 24 hours:
 - If negative, isolation can end unless the employee has symptoms.
 - If positive, continue isolating.

The People Leader must complete the [COVID-19 Employee Intake Form](#) and code the employee as IWP while they are waiting for results. Once the second rapid test is received, update the COVID-19 Employee Intake Form to capture the results and code time accordingly.

Positive with Symptoms

- Isolate immediately for 10 days or until symptoms resolve, whichever is longer.
- Book a PCR test only if you meet the [high-risk conditions](#).

The People Leader must complete the [COVID-19 Employee Intake Form](#) and time code the employee accordingly.