

Ministry of Health

Office of Chief Medical Officer of
Health, Public Health
393 University Avenue, 21st Floor
Toronto ON M5G 2M2
Tel.: 416 212-3831

Ministère de la Santé

Bureau du médecin
hygiéniste en chef, santé
publique
393 avenue University, 21^e
étage
Toronto ON M5G 2M2
Tél. : 416 212-3831



February 2, 2021

TO: Medical Officers of Health and Associate Medical Officers of Health,

The Ministry of Long-Term Care (MLTC) informed all long-term care home licensees on Jan. 27, 2021 that they are mandated to transition to point-of-care rapid antigen tests for staff, student placements and volunteers, as well as caregivers, support workers and general visitors (where permitted entry). The MLTC is moving forward to support this implementation in partnership with the sector, the Ministry of Health and Ontario Health.

Abbott Panbio™ test kits are being made available through Ontario Health at no cost to LTC homes to support the use of this additional tool as a means for enhancing protection.

As you know, antigen tests such as Panbio™ can be used to screen asymptomatic individuals. All positive results must be confirmed via a PCR test.

The use of antigen testing in non-outbreak LTC homes provides an opportunity for earlier identification of positive COVID-19 cases. Available evidence indicates that frequent screening with rapid antigen tests increases the chances of early identification of cases and mitigates the lower sensitivity of a single antigen test. The recent antigen testing pilot in a select group of LTC homes showed 80% of all positive screening results were confirmed positive for COVID-19.

LTC homes in outbreak should continue to follow the existing requirements in the COVID-19 [Provincial Testing Guidance Update](#) and [Directive #3 for Long-Term Care Homes under the Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007](#). PCR tests are used for diagnosis. Any use of antigen tests to supplement (i.e., using in addition to) PCR testing requirements in outbreak settings remains under the guidance and direction of local Public Health Units.

The use of antigen testing does not replace other critical public health measures such as symptom screening, physical distancing, masking and hand hygiene, appropriate use of personal protective equipment (PPE), and strong infection and prevention control (IPAC) practices.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "D Williams".

David C. Williams, MD, MHSc,
Chief Medical Officer of Health

- c: Helen Angus, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health (MOH)
Richard Steele, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Long-Term Care (MLTC)
Matthew Anderson, President and CEO, Ontario Health
Dr. Barbara Yaffe, Associate Chief Medical Officer of Health
Alison Blair, Associate Deputy Minister, Pandemic Response and Recovery Division, MOH
Erin Hannah, Associate Deputy Minister, LTC Pandemic Response, MLTC