

Ministry of Health

Office of the Assistant Deputy Minister
Testing Planning and
Implementation

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Ministère de la Santé

Bureau du sous-ministre adjoint
Planification et mise en œuvre
relatives au dépistage

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DATE: **June 3, 2021**

TO: Assistant Deputy Ministers of all Provincial Antigen Screening Program Participants, and related stakeholders involved in the deployment of free COVID-19 antigen point-of-care test kits in Ontario.

FROM: Melissa Thomson
Assistant Deputy Minister, Testing Planning and Implementation
Pandemic Recovery and Response Division, Ministry of Health

SUBJECT: **Changes to Waste Disposal Requirements for Rapid Antigen Screening Tests**

This memo serves to inform of a recent regulatory change to the waste disposal requirements for COVID-19 antigen screening tests in Ontario, which is intended to further reduce implementation barriers for organizations.

Obligations for Handling and Disposing of Used Antigen Point-of-Care Tests

Waste generated from rapid antigen screening tests is considered a hazardous waste under the *Environmental Protection Act*. To ease rapid antigen testing requirements for small organizations, Ontario has exempted organizations from requirements related to the collection, handling, storage and transportation of hazardous waste related to testing kits, while still requiring that the used kits are sent for final treatment and disposal at an approved hazardous waste disposal site in Ontario.

Guidance on how waste from rapid testing kits should be handled has been developed by the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks, and can be found here: [Safe Handling and Management of Rapid Antigen COVID-19 Testing Waste](#).

These changes will make it easier for small organizations or other persons to safely handle this waste while still protecting human health and the environment.

Additional Resources

The Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health has released [updated provincial guidance](#) related to testing to reflect the regulatory and operational changes noted above, which can be found here: [COVID-19 Antigen Screening Guidance](#).

Several other updates to provincial guidance have also been made:

- Changes to recommended antigen screening frequency, to align with Ontario's *Roadmap to Reopening*:
 - Antigen screening should be performed 2-3 times per week during step 1 and 2 of [Ontario's reopening plan](#).
 - Antigen screening should be performed 1-2 times per week during step 3 of [Ontario's reopening plan](#).
- Individuals who have received a preliminary positive result using a rapid antigen screening test continue to be advised to seek a confirmatory, lab-based PCR test as soon as possible. Guidance on the ideal timeframe for confirmatory testing has been revised from within 24 hours to within 48 hours, to reflect realistic access to testing in many areas of the province.

Provincial Antigen Screening Program documentation has also been updated to reflect these changes.

Key Contact Information

For questions about antigen point-of-care testing and/or the Provincial Antigen Screening Program, please contact the Ministry of Health by way of email to: Blair.Audet@ontario.ca.

For questions about hazardous waste and/or waste disposal of antigen tests, please contact the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks by way of email to: Dale.Gable@ontario.ca.

Sincerely,



Melissa Thomson
Assistant Deputy Minister, Testing Planning and Implementation

c: Karen Moore, Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks
Fredrika Scarth, Director, Testing Strategy Coordination Branch, Pandemic Recovery and Response Division, Ministry of Health
Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health
Elizabeth Walker, Director, Accountability and Liaison Branch, Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, Ministry of Health