

Rapid Testing Information for Schools For Parents and Caregivers

The safety, health and well-being of students and school staff is a priority for the Government of Saskatchewan. That is why the Government of Saskatchewan is pleased to provide rapid testing options for schools across the province. School divisions will work in consultation with local medical health officers to determine when – and if – rapid testing is needed.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the purpose of using rapid tests in schools?

Rapid tests are generally used as a screening tool to identify the presence of COVID-19 in asymptomatic individuals. They may be carried out when there are known cases in the school and/or community. This ensures additional positive cases are quickly identified and isolated.

Rapid testing in schools does not replace community testing. If you are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, or have been in contact with someone who is experiencing symptoms, the Saskatchewan Health Authority recommends getting a referral to a community testing centre or visiting a drive-thru testing site.

How will it be determined which schools get these tests?

School divisions and public health officials will evaluate a number of factors in the school and surrounding community to determine when and where to distribute the tests.

What training is provided?

Training will be conducted through an online module that has been developed by the Saskatchewan Health Authority Laboratory Medicine Department.

Is the training available now?

Scheduled live training is currently available through WebEx. The SHA expects an on-demand online module will be available by April 5.

Where can those who want to administer rapid COVID-19 testing in schools sign up for training?

Community groups or organizations that are willing to administer rapid tests in schools are encouraged to apply through the RFPQ that is posted on SaskTenders.ca. (Search keywords “rapid antigen testing”.)

What are the requirements for a student to get a rapid test?

The decision will be made based on factors considered by the Medical Health Officer in consultation with the school. The student must have a signed consent form prior to having a test administered. A school may choose to get consent forms pre-authorized, so there is no delay once a decision to perform tests is made.

Will parents be required to provide consent for the test to be administered to their children?

Consent is required before a test is performed. If a parent or caregiver does not provide written consent for a minor, no test will be done. This testing is entirely voluntary.

On top of parental permission, any student 14-years-old or over will be required to sign a consent form in order to obtain testing.

What happens if a student has symptoms?

Rapid antigen tests are only appropriate for individuals who have no symptoms of COVID-19. Students with symptoms of COVID-19 will be asked to wear a non-medical mask and self isolate in a separate room until a parent or guardian arrives to take the student home. Areas the student was in contact with will be identified and thoroughly cleaned. The student can return to school after receiving a negative COVID-19 test and/or 48 hours after symptoms resolve.

What happens if a student tests positive or negative?

If a student tests positive with the point of care test, they will be asked to wear a non-medical mask and self-isolate in a separate room until a parent or guardian arrives to take the student home. The family will be contacted by public health about the next steps including arrangements to attend a testing centre to have a definitive PCR test administered. If a student tests negative, no further action is required.

How much do the tests cost?

The tests are free. They were provided to Saskatchewan through the federal allocation, so there is no cost to the province or to schools, teachers or parents.

Are these tests safe?

Yes, nasal swabs are minimally invasive. They can be done safely by an individual after they have been trained.

Do point-of-care tests hurt?

No, the nasal swab used to perform the test does not hurt. This test is much less uncomfortable than the nasopharyngeal swab that is required for PCR tests. If a student changes their mind about having the test, they are free to opt-out.