

Testing for COVID-19

What you need to know

Factsheet | Version 2.0 | 27 April 2023

Testing for COVID-19 continues to be available for people with symptoms or those living with someone who has tested positive.

This fact sheet contains information about COVID-19 testing options, test results, what happens if you test positive and important information about antiviral medication and COVID-19 treatment.

COVID-19 symptoms? Get tested

It is important to stay at home and to get tested for COVID-19 if you have any cold or flu-like symptoms, no matter how mild.

You still need to get tested even if you have been vaccinated. Testing and early detection of COVID-19 mean you can look after your health and protect others.

There are 2 types of tests for COVID-19:

- **rapid antigen self-tests (RATs)**
This type of test is quick and easy to use, you can do the test yourself, and the results are known in around 10 to 20 minutes.
- **polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test**
This type of test is sent to a Laboratory for a result, and results are known within 24 - 48 hours.

Test early

Testing as soon as symptoms start is very important for people who are eligible for antiviral medicine to treat COVID-19 and flu. You can use a RAT, or some people are recommended to get a PCR test.

If eligible for antiviral medication, treatment must start as soon as possible after symptoms begin.

If you believe you are at higher risk of severe illness, you should make a treatment plan with your GP before you get sick for access to testing and antiviral medicines if you test positive.

See overpage for more information about antiviral medication. Test early

Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs)

RATs are an easy and convenient way to test for COVID-19 and remain the best option for most Tasmanians who are not at higher risk from COVID-19.

They are simple to use, and you can do the test yourself at home or anywhere you feel comfortable.

Concession card holders can access a limited supply of RATs through Service Tasmania centres.

There are 27 Service Tasmania centres located around Tasmania. To find your nearest centre call **1300 135 513** or visit the Service Tasmania website.

Eligible card holders:

- Commonwealth Seniors Health Card
- Health Care Card
- Low Income Health Care Card
- Pensioner Concession Card
- Department of Veterans' Affairs Gold, White or Orange card
- Tasmanian Seniors Card.

You will need to show your physical card, or your digital card in the Express Plus Centrelink mobile app. Limits are 10 RATs over a 3 month period, with a maximum of 5 per month.

If you live in a rural or regional area and/or are unable to leave home, such as people with a disability, please contact the Public Health Hotline on 1800 671 738 to discuss options for accessing RATs.

RATs are also readily available for purchase at supermarkets and pharmacies.

Register a positive RAT result

If you have tested positive on a RAT, register your result by filling in the online form or call the Public Health Hotline on **1800 671 738**. Positive RAT results need to be registered within 10 days.

Registration of your result means your GP is made aware of your result and you can access the care and support you need, including through COVID@homeplus.

You will also have evidence of a positive test result after receiving an SMS message from Department of Health. If you have a positive PCR test result, you do not need to report a positive RAT result.

PCR testing

Some people are recommended to get a PCR test.

You may need a PCR if:

- you are at higher risk of severe illness and may be eligible for antiviral medication
- you are having difficulty using a RAT or are unable to use a RAT
- you get an invalid result after taking a RAT
- you get a negative RAT result and have ongoing symptoms
- your GP or medical practitioner recommends you get a PCR test.

PCR testing How to get tested

- Your local GP clinic may offer COVID-19, flu or RSV testing or provide a GP referral to pathology service.
- People at higher risk of severe illness who cannot access a GP referral can call the COVID@homeplus team on 1800 973 363 to discuss testing options.
- You may be provided with a self-collect swab kit to use. Self-collect swabs involve taking a specimen from the throat and both nostrils, and simple instructions to follow are provided by the pathology service. For more information on GP referred self-collection speak to your health provider.

To find out more about testing options visit www.health.tas.gov.au/covid19/testing or call the Public Health Hotline on **1800 671 738**.

Tested positive?

If you test positive for COVID-19 it is important to look after your health and get help if needed.

The COVID@homeplus team is available for advice and support for anyone who has COVID-19 or is caring for someone with COVID-19. Call the team at any time on **1800 973 363**.

COVID-19 is serious, but most people who are up to date with their COVID-19 vaccinations will only experience mild illness with symptoms such as a fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose, or loss of taste and smell.

Contact your GP if you test positive to COVID-19. If you don't have a regular GP, call the COVID@homeplus care team on **1800 973 363**.

Please be aware that COVID@homeplus is not an emergency or urgent care service. The COVID@homeplus team assess, monitor and support eligible people to safely recover from respiratory illness at home.

If your symptoms get seriously worse, especially if it happens very suddenly, or you feel like it's an emergency, call triple zero (000) or go straight to hospital. Make sure you tell them you have COVID-19.

Antiviral medication

Medications are available to eligible people who test positive for COVID-19. These medications are referred to as antiviral medicines, or simply 'antivirals.'

Antiviral medicines must be prescribed by a medical doctor or a nurse practitioner.

Antiviral medications may not be right for everyone, even if you have a higher risk of severe illness. Your doctor will assess you. They will consider other medical conditions you may have and other medications you are taking, before prescribing antiviral medications.

Find out more about eligibility at www.health.gov.au/health-alerts/covid-19/treatments/eligibility

If you believe you are at higher risk, you should:

- make a treatment plan with your GP or health care provider before you get sick. This is because you need to begin taking antivirals for COVID-19 within 5 days of symptoms starting.
- People at higher risk of severe disease may be recommended to get a PCR test, but both a positive PCR or RAT can be used to access antiviral medications.
- Let your GP know if you get a PCR test at a testing site that is not at your regular GP. Do not wait for your test result to contact your GP.
- If you do test positive, let your GP or health care provider know straight away. Remember to register a positive RAT online or by phoning the Public Health Hotline on **1800 671 738**.
- If you do not have a regular doctor or they are not available, you can phone the COVID@homeplus team on **1800 973 363** to discuss your care options.