"When should I use a Rapid Antigen Test?"

A Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) is a do-it-yourself test that checks for COVID proteins in a sample you provide, usually from your nose. It gives you quick results on-the-spot and under 20 minutes. But the results are not conclusive, especially if negative. If these tests are available to you, use them with care. There are 4 main uses for a RAT:

01 / Testing when you have symptoms:

If you have symptoms, assume you have COVID and self-isolate — regardless of your RAT result.

If you do use a RAT, we suggest swabbing the back of your throat before you do each nostril. This may improve the test's accuracy.

If you have COVID symptoms, a positive RAT confirms you have COVID. However, a negative RAT result does not mean you are COVID-free.

If you have symptoms, self-isolate together with ALL members of your household (for more information, see https://bit.ly/3q4Eyxb).

02 / As part of an organized program:

If you take part in an organized screening program, you could be helping reduce the risk of COVID spreading to places where people must be together like hospitals, long-term care homes, schools.

People in these settings who have no signs of COVID can use RATs multiple times a week to detect the virus before symptoms develop.

Updated: Jan. 12, 2022
For other questions, please visit **ConfusedAboutCOVID.ca**.

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03 Testing to return to work:

If you work at a hospital, long-term care home or other high-risk setting, and you had COVID or had been exposed to it, RATs can clear you to return to work sooner and help with critical staffing shortages.

04 One-time testing when you do not have symptoms:

If you have no COVID symptoms and you get a negative RAT result, that does not tell you very much.

People infected with COVID may test negative for several days before testing positive on a RAT. Do not let a negative result reassure you.

We do not recommend one-off testing before a social event. If you decide to use a RAT for this purpose, test yourself on the same day as the gathering, ideally only a few hours before the event.

Remember: Even if your RAT is negative, keep following public health advice.

Limit indoor gathering with people outside your household. If indoors with people you don't live with, always wear a well-fitted mask, keep a physical distance, wash your hands and make sure there is good ventilation.

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