



APPROACH TO RAPID ANTIGEN SCREENING IN THE WORKPLACE

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For the Business Leaders' Health and Safety Forum

How do I effectively screen staff to minimise the risk of them entering the workplace positive?

Rapid Antigen Tests are effective in detecting individuals at their most infectious phases, and allow businesses to screen possible infectious persons from attending work, allowing for business continuity.

- Optimal rapid antigen testing arrangements to minimise the risk of a positive worker at the workplace is **2-3 times a week** because Omicron has an incubation period of three days¹.
- Studies show that testing every 2-3 days, at worksites with high-risk cohorts can reduce infection risk to 5-10% even in areas of high community transmission.²
- Testing on a daily basis reduces the risk to almost zero.²

¹Araf, Y., Akter, F., Tang, Y.-d., Fatemi, R., Parvez, M. S., Zheng, C., & Hossain, M. G. (2022). Omicron variant of SARS-CoV-2: Genomics, transmissibility, and responses to current COVID-19 vaccines. (1-8)
²Mina, M. J., Parker, R., & Larremore, D. B. (2020). Rethinking Covid-19 Test Sensitivity — A Strategy for Containment. *The New England Journal of Medicine*, 1-3.

I have a constrained supply of RAT tests, how can I use them effectively?

*When your RAT supply is limited, it is recommended **businesses prioritise critical worker or vulnerable worker cohorts** to undertake a prioritisation approach. With an objective to identify infection as early as possible to minimise the risk to business continuity.*

EXAMPLES OF PRIORITY GROUPS	DAILY/WEEKLY OPERATING PROCEDURES DEFINITION	EXPOSURE TESTING REGIME
Critical worker by MoH definition https://covid19.govt.nz/testing-and-tracing/contact-tracing/critical-workers/	Recommended 3-times a week RAT testing prior to entry to work (ideally before leaving home).	Household contact: If critical worker becomes a household contact: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommend daily testing for 10 days (MOH guidance) but can continue to work under the critical worker exemption scheme. Close Contact: Recommend if critical worker becomes a close contact: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Daily testing for 7 days to minimise risk of exposure to the business by infecting other critical workers
Critical worker as defined by the business	Recommended 3-times a week RAT testing prior to entry to work (ideally before leaving home).	Household contact: follow MOH direction to isolate. Close Contact: Recommend: If an essential worker becomes a close contact: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Daily testing for 7 days to minimise risk to the business by infecting other essential workers.
All other workers		Weekly testing may provide some protection if targeted to prior to the commencement of a shift rotation, or after a weekend or after multiple days off.

What impact will differing rapid antigen testing frequency have on risk management?

Risk Overlay; Percentage of potential cases not captured relevant to community infection rates

Testing Frequency (regime)	Risk of transmission (reduction in reproductive rate)
Daily Testing (antigen)	Reduced to almost zero
3 times a week	5-10%
Weekly	50-60%
Fortnightly	70-80%

How can I use RATs to slow down transmission at work?

RATs are most effective in detecting when someone is infectious. If someone tests positive on a RAT you can be certain that individual is infectious, therefore allowing you to isolate that individual, preventing risk of further transmission.



For this to be effective, the following needs to be considered;

<p>1. Frequency 2-3 times weekly test more effective with the current strain</p>	<p>2. Testing has to occur before workers come to work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If at home testing – this has to be done at home before travelling to work • If at work – testing site need to be set up in a space pre-entering the workplace. 	<p>3. Training Staff need to be trained in how to use the specific RAT (each product has different methodology – especially with the timing to read the results and the collection of sample)</p>	<p>4. Result reporting system Appropriate reporting system needs to be established (easy to use and not imposing on workers time)</p>	<p>5. Information and communication Appropriate information on what to do if either positive or negative</p>	<p>6. Outbreak management plan What to do on a positive case at work</p>
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Further information

Supporting evidence for this Guide: <https://www.forum.org.nz/resources/covid-support-for-business/approach-to-rat-screening-in-the-workplace/>

Living with Covid Principles (from the GM Safety Forum, supported by HASANZ):
<https://www.forum.org.nz/resources/covid-support-for-business/living-with-covid-principles/>

RAT suppliers in NZ (managed by BusinessNZ):
<https://www.businessnz.org.nz/resources/covid-19/businessnz-rat-suppliers>