

Workplace Protection & Tools

OMAFRA

As Ontario moves forward, workplaces must remain vigilant and continue to follow recommended public health guidance in order to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission. The agri-food industry across the supply chain has remained strong and kept the province fed through this all but COVID-19 presents an on-going risk.

Supports & Workplace Protection Tools:

- Rapid Antigen Testing Update
- WSPS:
 - Changes to MOH guidance and implications for workplace health and safety
 - Vaccine policies guidance
 - Consulting & Training through WSPS (*funded by the Governments of Ontario & Canada*)

Rapid Screening Reminders and Updates

The Provincial Antigen Screening Program (PASP) continues to be available for all organizations that are allowed to be open under current public health measures, and require employees to be physically present or any organization mandated to test through a provincial directive (e.g. [Directive 6](#)).

Updates to guidance are being made to further ease implementation considerations for organizations undertaking rapid testing initiatives, including those who are required to screen staff who are not fully vaccinated as part of a mandatory vaccination policy including:

- Antigen POCT is **not recommended for individuals who are fully vaccinated**
- **Frequency** of antigen POCT: **at least one time per week, and up to 2-3 times per week** for individuals who are not fully vaccinated.
- **Facilitating at-home self-screening** through:
 - Unsupervised self-swabbing.
 - At-home disposal of rapid test waste as the regulatory requirements for managing the hazardous waste under the Environmental Protection Act do not apply

Note: **temporary foreign workers** (rephrased from farm workers) remain eligible for asymptomatic lab-based PCR testing under the Provincial Testing Guidance.

Rapid Screening Test Supply

- The Abbott Panbio brand is historically the most readily available rapid antigen test for Provincial Antigen Screening Program (PASP), however there are many comparable Health Canada approved tests, and Health Canada is now diversifying procurements.
- Ontario will be **introducing two new rapid antigen tests** into its supply imminently:
 - BD Veritor
 - BTNX
- Using the new test types is extremely similar to using Panbio, with comparable performance (i.e., sensitivity & accuracy).
- Companies participating in rapid testing will receive shipments of either Panbio, BD Veritor (without analyzer) or BTNX based on test inventory at the time of an order being place.



All test types can be split into mini kits for at-home screening to avoid test wastage. Depending on the brand of test you receive kits can be divided into 4 weeks worth of at home screening supplies for each participant. Interested sites can visit [COVID-19 Health System Response Materials | Ontario Health](#) for instructions.

Self Testing Pilots

- *Specimen collection for POCT antigen tests may also be done with the supervision of a trained individual or done by the person being tested ('self-swabbing'). The tests can be conducted by the individual at home prior to coming to the workplace.*

Agri-Food Sector Self Testing Pilots

OMAFRA has conducted rapid antigen **self-testing pilots** that ran between **July 19th and September 11th**.

The pilots were uniquely focused on providing valuable insight into the effectiveness of self-testing for monitoring and surveillance amongst **equity seeking populations** and **OMAFRA field staff** who have been supporting the economy and ensuring food sustainability and availability throughout the pandemic.

The Pilots were administered by either Creative Destruction Labs or CAFS (e.g., ordering kits, reporting, support/administration, etc.)

Benefits for self testing at home

- ✓ Individual health autonomy
- ✓ Access to tests from remote locations
- ✓ Identifies a positive case before entering the workplace
- ✓ No need for supervision
- ✓ Disposal in household garbage



Qualitative and **quantitative** data was collected throughout the pilots to:

- Identify operational and policy barriers to rapid antigen self-testing;
- Assist the province in preparing for broader availability of self-testing devices;
- Inform considerations for rapid antigen self-testing for the agri-food sector, including equity seeking populations and those that work across multiple sites.

