

Home use tests for COVID-19

This fact sheet explains what COVID-19 home use tests (also known as COVID-19 rapid antigen self-tests) are, how they can be used at home, and what to do when you get a result.

What is a home use test (rapid antigen self-test) for COVID-19?

Home use tests for COVID-19 test a nasal swab sample or saliva for the presence of the virus that causes COVID-19.

A home use test can be used by people in the home, workplace or elsewhere without the involvement of a doctor or health practitioner. Most home use tests produce a result within 10-20 minutes.

The tests are most reliable when used by a person who has symptoms of COVID-19. They are not as reliable when used to test someone who does not have symptoms.

IMPORTANT: Home use tests are not as accurate as the tests done in the laboratory (called PCR tests). It is important that:

- if the home use test is POSITIVE you must go to a testing site to have a PCR test as soon as possible. This will confirm whether you have COVID-19.
- if the home use test is NEGATIVE but you are unwell, you also need to go to a testing site to have a PCR test. This will confirm whether your symptoms are or are not COVID-19.

Different state and territories may have different recommendations for testing and for reporting positive results, based on their public health orders. Please see their websites for any local reporting requirements.

Where can I get a Rapid Antigen home use test?

Home use tests can be purchased from pharmacies, supermarkets and other retail outlets, including online. Only tests approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) are legally permitted to be sold in Australia.

It is very important that you only use a home use test that has been approved by the TGA. The TGA website has a list of all home use tests approved by the TGA, along with a copy of the manufacturer's instructions for each test.

How do I use a test?

A number of different home use tests are available and each one is different. It is very important to follow the steps in the instructions provided with the test you use.

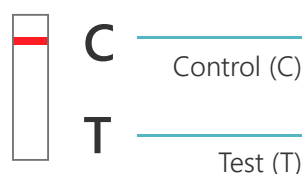
Not using the test properly can result in incorrect results.

All tests are for single-use only which means you can only use each test ONCE and then it must be thrown away. Do not ever use a test more than once or attempt to use one test on different people.

What do test results look like?

Most home use test kit results will be shown in a window and the instructions provided with the test will explain what the result means.

As an example, the results could look like this:



Negative Result



A second line even if faint is a positive result

What do I do if I get a positive result?

If you get a positive result you must get a PCR test at a laboratory or testing site as soon as possible to confirm you have COVID-19.

It is recommended that you stay at home after a positive home use test result and while waiting for your PCR test result. Contact your state or territory health department to find out about quarantine requirements.

What do I do if I get a negative result?

If you get a negative result it is less likely that you have COVID-19 but you still need to follow all public health advice on limiting the spread of COVID-19.

If you feel unwell or have symptoms you should get a PCR test at a testing site as soon as possible to confirm you do not have COVID-19.

What do I do if I get an 'invalid' result?

As well as positive and negative results, a test may produce an 'invalid' result, which means it has not worked correctly. If this happens, you should throw the test away and either perform a new test or get a laboratory PCR test done at a testing site.

How regularly should I use home use tests?

This will depend on what you have been told by your employer or school, or on the recommendations or requirements in the state or territory where you live. Check your state or territory Health Departments website for information.

Can home use tests be used for children?

Tests on children should always be done or supervised by an adult. See the instructions provided with the test for any safety instructions to follow if using the test on a child.

How do I dispose of a home use test?

This will vary according to information provided with the test instructions. Some tests come with a plastic bag to place the contents of the test into (including the swab). This bag is then placed into another bag for disposal with the household rubbish.

If no bags are provided you can place the used items from the test into a small plastic bag that can be sealed. This bag should be put into another bag that can be sealed and disposed of in the household rubbish.

Wash your hands carefully after completing the test and disposing of the test kit contents.

Other things to consider

What are the concerns with home use tests and are they accurate?

Home use tests are not as accurate as laboratory PCR tests, but they are very helpful because they provide results quickly. They can also pick up the COVID-19 virus very early in the infection, sometimes before you have symptoms.

In parts of Australia where there are low rates of COVID-19, the tests are less accurate as there is a higher risk of both false positive and false negative results.

Positive home use test results must be confirmed by a PCR test at a laboratory or testing site.

A symptomatic person who has a negative result with a home use test should always seek further PCR testing to confirm they do not have COVID-19.

Reporting problems

If you are concerned that a product you have purchased is faulty or doesn't perform in accordance with the supplier/sponsor's claims you should report this directly to the supplier/sponsor of the test, or to the place where you purchased the test.

You can also report problems with the tests to the Therapeutic Goods Administration online at [tga.gov.au/reporting-problems](https://www.tga.gov.au/reporting-problems)

Further information

More detailed information on Rapid Antigen Home Use Tests and Point of Care tests can be found at:

[tga.gov.au/covid-19-point-care-tests](https://www.tga.gov.au/covid-19-point-care-tests) and
[tga.gov.au/covid-19-rapid-antigen-self-tests](https://www.tga.gov.au/covid-19-rapid-antigen-self-tests)



More information:

Please contact us at COVIDtests@tga.gov.au or 1800 141 144.