

Questions and Answers for Pharmacists: Publicly Funded COVID-19 Antigen Point- of-Care Testing in Ontario Pharmacies

This Questions and Answers document accompanies the most recent Executive Officer (EO) Notice on Publicly Funded COVID-19 Antigen Point-of-Care Testing in Ontario Pharmacies available on the [ministry website](#). This Questions and Answers document also replaces any previous version on the same topic on the ministry website.

September 8 2021

This Questions and Answers document accompanies the *Executive Officer Notice: Publicly Funded COVID-19 Antigen Point-of-Care Testing in Ontario Pharmacies*

These Qs and As and the accompanying [EO Notice](#) constitute a Ministry policy that pharmacy operators must comply with when submitting claims for payment to the Ministry respecting pharmacy services related to COVID-19 antigen point-of-care tests (POCT). Compliance with all Ministry policies is required under section 3.2 of the Health Network System (HNS) Subscription Agreement for Pharmacy Operators.

Patient Eligibility

1. Who is eligible for COVID-19 antigen point-of-care testing in pharmacies?

For the current eligibility criteria, please see the most recent *Executive Officer Notice: Publicly Funded COVID-19 Antigen Point-of-Care Testing in Ontario Pharmacies* posted on the ministry's [website](#).

2. Can an individual who receives a positive result from a rapid antigen point-of-care test (POCT) be provided with pharmacy services related to a PCR COVID-19 laboratory test?

No. Patients who receive a positive result from a rapid antigen POCT are **NOT eligible** for a PCR COVID-19 laboratory test at pharmacies. These individuals should be directed to an assessment centre or a participating community lab for testing.

3. Are individuals required to provide documentation to prove their eligibility?

Yes. Individuals must provide a copy of the letter issued by their school/school board or child care centre authorizing them to receive a rapid antigen POCT to prove their eligibility. This letter should include the school/school board/child care centre letterhead

and have the individual's details. Individuals should also present valid photo identification along with this authorization letter to confirm their identity

4. Are students and children who attend target schools or child care settings, or household members of staff of the target schools, child care settings, and school boards eligible as part of the school and child care testing campaign?

No. For the current eligibility criteria, please see the most recent *Publicly Funded COVID-19 Antigen Point-of-Care Testing in Ontario Pharmacies* posted on the ministry's [website](#).

Pharmacy Eligibility

5. How can pharmacies participate? Where can I obtain POCT kits?

Pharmacies are responsible for procuring their own supply of COVID-19 antigen POCT kits. However, where supply is immediately unavailable, the province may provide pharmacies with additional supply. If a pharmacy is utilizing provincially procured POCT kits, the cost of the test kit (\$7.85 inclusive of HST) will be deducted from the total amount paid to the pharmacy.

Pharmacies must abide by the billing requirements, policies and guidelines set out in the most recent *Executive Officer Notice: Publicly Funded COVID-19 Antigen Point-of-Care Testing in Ontario Pharmacies* posted on the ministry's [website](#).

Please note that COVID-19 antigen point-of-care test kits procured through federal programs **CANNOT** be utilized for this service unless explicit authorization is received from the federal government.

6. Who can perform a publicly funded COVID-19 antigen POCT?

Pharmacists, pharmacy students/interns, and pharmacy technicians are allowed to collect specimens for publicly funded perform COVID-19 antigen POCTs (including the specimen collection required for the test).

7. What training will be provided to pharmacists for antigen POCTs?

Pharmacists are encouraged to be familiar with the procedure of specimen collection for antigen POCTs and performing antigen POCTs. Training materials are available from Ontario Health in an online format and include [suite of written materials and pre-recorded training modules](#).

- An [Onboarding Guide](#), as well as training modules on how to use Abbott Panbio™ have been developed by Ontario Health and can be found on their [website](#).
- An Onboarding Guide, as well as training modules on how to use BD Veritor™ have been developed by Ontario Health and can be found on their [website](#).

Participation in training is not a mandatory requirement of this program but will help build confidence and competence for those performing the screening test. It is the professional responsibility of every pharmacist to ensure that they have the appropriate training on specimen collection and performing POCTs and sufficient knowledge to competently carry out these activities.

8. What protocols or requirements must be in place before a pharmacy can perform POCTs?

Pharmacies are expected to implement and follow general infection and prevention control measures to help protect their staff, patients, and customers against COVID-19. Appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) must also be worn. For more information, please visit the ministry's website on [COVID-19: Considerations for Antigen Point-of-Care Testing](#). Pharmacies must also read the Ontario College of Pharmacists (OCP) [Guidance document](#) and meet OCP's guidance and standards and code of ethics requirements.

9. How many antigen POCTs can a pharmacy perform per day?

There are no daily restrictions for pharmacy billing of the Antigen POCT Test Fees. However, see the patient eligibility criteria in the most recent *Executive Officer Notice: Publicly Funded COVID-19 Antigen Point-of-Care Testing in Ontario Pharmacies* posted on the ministry's [website](#).

10. Is COVID-19 antigen POCT at pharmacies available by walk-in or appointment?

Publicly funded antigen POCT at pharmacies is recommended to occur by pre-booked appointment; however, some pharmacies may choose to offer walk-in appointment. Pharmacies are able to implement a booking procedure that best suits their business operations.

Pharmacies that choose to offer walk-in appointments are reminded of their responsibility for informing and educating the public on COVID-19, including promoting infection prevention and control measures.

Billing

11. What information on payment for antigen POCT is available for pharmacists?

For billing instructions, please see the most recent *Executive Officer Notice: Publicly Funded COVID-19 Antigen Point-of-Care Testing in Ontario Pharmacies* posted on the ministry's [website](#).

12. How are claims for services relating to COVID-19 antigen POCT submitted through the HNS?

HNS claims for pharmacy services relating to publicly funded COVID-19 antigen POCT must contain the appropriate PINs when an eligible person receives the service at the pharmacy. Please see the most recent *Executive Officer Notice: Publicly Funded*

COVID-19 Antigen Point-of-Care Testing in Ontario Pharmacies posted on the ministry's [website](#).

Pharmacists must ensure the patient's correct date of birth, Ontario health card number and name (as it appears on the health card) are entered accurately as part of the HNS claim submission. For individuals **without** a health card number, use the proxy ID # 79999 999 93. Please refer to the corresponding [EO Notice](#) for further details.

13. What is the procedure to submit the claim to the HNS for pharmacy services relating to COVID-19 antigen POCT?

The claim submission follows the normal process for submitting claims on the HNS.

14. How does the ministry pay a participating pharmacy for services relating to COVID-19 antigen POCT?

The payment is paid through the ministry's HNS to the accredited pharmacy that has a billing account with the ministry.

15. Can I submit manual (paper) claims for services relating to COVID-19 antigen POCT?

Paper claims will not be accepted. Claims must be submitted online to the HNS only.

16. When does the pharmacist submit the claim for payment for the service relating to COVID-19 antigen POCT?

Claims must be billed using the service date.

Documentation and Record Keeping

17. I am having trouble putting the claim through the HNS. Who should I contact?

If pharmacies have any questions or concerns related to billing issues, please contact the ODB Help Desk at 1-800-668-6641.

For other inquiries related to COVID-19 testing in pharmacies, please send an email to: OPDPInfoBox@ontario.ca

Restrictions

18. Are there any restrictions on submitting claims for pharmacy antigen POCT?

Please refer to the most recent *Executive Officer Notice: Publicly Funded COVID-19 Antigen Point-of-Care Testing in Ontario Pharmacies* posted on the ministry's [website](#)

19. Can federally procured antigen POCT kits be used?

POCT kits procured through federal programs CANNOT be used to provide this provincially funded service unless explicit authorization is received from the federal government.

20. Does this Program apply to pharmacy services related to PCR COVID-19 laboratory testing?

No. Claims for publicly funded pharmacy services related to PCR COVID-19 laboratory testing cannot be submitted as part of this program. Such services are only available for at risk, asymptomatic persons that belong to a targeted testing group as outlined in the *Updated Executive Officer Notice: Specimen Collection for COVID-19 Testing of At-Risk Asymptomatic Persons through Ontario Pharmacies: Eligibility Criteria* dated August 27, 2021.

Additional Questions

21. Is there any additional follow-up or care required for providing this service? How will patients be notified of their test results?

Rapid antigen tests are less sensitive and specific than lab-based PCR tests, so results are not as accurate. Rapid antigen tests may yield some false negative test results (i.e., a result that indicates the individual is not infected with COVID-19 when in fact they are), and to a lesser extent, some false positive test results (i.e., a result that indicates the individual is infected with COVID-19 when in fact they are not). Results should therefore be interpreted with caution and individuals should be reminded of the possibility that the test result may be inaccurate.

Test results take about 15 minutes to be processed. If an individual tested with a rapid antigen POCT receives a positive result, they should be reminded that the test result should be interpreted as a **preliminary** positive and that it may be inaccurate. Pharmacists must instruct the individual to seek a lab-based PCR test or rapid molecular point-of-care test (e.g., ID NOW) as soon as possible (ideally within 48 hours) to act as a confirmatory test and should self-isolate until a confirmatory test result is received.

Please note that patients who receive a positive result from a rapid antigen POCT are **NOT** eligible for a confirmatory follow-up specimen collection at a pharmacy for a PCR lab-based test. These individuals should be directed to an assessment centre or a participating community lab for testing.

22. A patient is requesting proof of their negative test result. What should I provide them?

Pharmacies are required to provide eligible individuals with written record of their test results.

23. What are the storage requirements for antigen POCT kits?

For specific information on Abbott Panbio™, please visit the manufacturer's [website](#).

For specific information on BD Veritor™, please visit the manufacturer's [website](#). Some test kits may have a longer shelf life than indicated by the marked expiry date. Please see the BD Veritor™ [Onboarding Guide](#) for more details.