

Ministry of HealthHealth Programs and Delivery
Division

Laboratories and Diagnostics Branch

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73-2023-5921

DATE: June 2, 2023

TO: PASP OPS PARTNERS (CONTINUING ACCESS) AND HPCs

FROM: Ms. Neeta Sarta
Director
Laboratories and Diagnostics Branch

SUBJECT: **Extended access for COVID-19 rapid antigen testing until December 31, 2023**

The temporary Provincial Antigen Screening Program (PASP) and Rapid Antigen Test Public Distribution Program played a pivotal role in the province's emergency pandemic response by providing people with easy access to free rapid antigen tests (RATs) when COVID-19 infection volumes were at their peak and extensive access to testing was essential to stopping its spread.

With the lower rates of COVID-19, high vaccination rates, and demand for RATs has been consistently decreasing, the province will be winding down its RAT programs starting June 30, 2023.

While some groups will exit the program on June 30, 2023, we are providing you and other partners that represent groups at highest risk for severe outcomes for COVID-19 continued access to free tests. All licensed retirement homes will have continued access to tests during the extended access period (July 1, 2023 to December 31, 2023). Licensed retirement homes are invited to continue to place orders using existing systems and processes.

Unused or expired tests cannot be returned to any central government warehouse due to quality control considerations. Program participants are encouraged to review [the Ministry of Environment, Conservation, and Parks \(MECP\) guidelines](#) regarding the proper and safe disposal of waste from RATs, including unused and/ or expired RAT kits. Information on manufacturer [expiry date extensions](#) can be found on the Ontario Health website.

Ontario's COVID-19 testing strategy will increasingly focus on molecular testing tools, which can be accessed at pharmacies and many other locations across Ontario. Individuals who qualify for testing can find a location close to them at: <https://www.ontario.ca/assessment-centre-locations>.

Program participants can contact the ministry at PASP@ontario.ca for more information about the wind down of the programs.

Thank you again for your support to these important provincial initiatives. These efforts were a significant part of our COVID-19 response, and we extend our thanks to the program partners, administrators, and staff who continue to support this work.

Sincerely,

“Originally signed by”

Neeta Sarta

c: Peter Kaftarian, Associate Deputy Minister, Clinical Care and Delivery, Ministry of Health
Angie Wong, A/Assistant Deputy Minister, Health Programs and Delivery, Ministry of Health
Susan Picarello, Assistant Deputy Minister, Emergency Health Services, Ministry of Health
Rhonda McMichael, Assistant Deputy Minister, Officer of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, Ministry of Health
Jackie Korecki, Assistant Deputy Minister, Supply Chain Ontario, Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery
Dr. Kieran Moore, Chief Medical Officer of Health, Ministry of Health
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Elizabeth Walker, Executive Lead, Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, Ministry of Health
Holly Moran, Assistant Deputy Minister, Early Years & Child Care, Ministry of Education
Rebecca Ramsarran, Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic Policy and Planning, Indigenous Affairs Office
Rupert Gordon, Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic Policy, Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services
Karen Glass, Assistant Deputy Minister, Community Services, Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services
Erin Hannah, Assistant Deputy Minister, Deputy Minister's Office, Ministry of Long-Term Care
Joshua Paul, Assistant Deputy Minister, Housing, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
Jacqueline Cureton, Assistant Deputy Minister, Policy, Programs and Strategic Partnerships, Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility
Heather Cassidy, Assistant Deputy Minister, Policy Division, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
Samantha Poisson, Assistant Deputy Attorney General (Acting), Recovery Division, Ministry of the Attorney General
Keith Palmer, Assistant Deputy Minister, Associate Deputy Minister's Office, Ministry of the Solicitor General
Richard Stubbings, Assistant Deputy Minister, Public Safety, Ministry of the Solicitor General
Kenneth Weatherill, Inspector General of Policing, Inspectorate of Policing, Ministry of the Solicitor General
Dr. Vanessa Allen, Medical Director, Provincial Diagnostic Network, Ontario Health
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