

## Clinical Guideline



**Health**  
Hunter New England  
Local Health District

## COVID-19 Community Testing in HNELHD Testing Clinics

<b>Sites where PCP applies</b>	All HNELHD COVID-19 testing sites
<b>This PCP applies to:</b>	
1. Adults	Yes
2. Children up to 16 years	Yes
3. Neonates – less than 29 days	Yes
	Approval gained from the Children, Young People and Families Network on 30 March 2022
<b>Target audience</b>	All staff
<b>Description</b>	This guideline provides information on the types of SARS-CoV-2 testing and guidance on the appropriate testing regime for people presenting to HNELHD testing clinics.

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<b>Keywords</b>	COVID-19, COVID, SARS-CoV-2, PCR, Rapid PCR, RAT, Rapid Antigen
<b>Document registration number</b>	HNELHD CG 22_03
<b>Replaces existing document?</b>	Yes
<b>Registration number and dates of superseded documents</b>	HNELHD CG 22_03 Version Two from 21 January 2022; Version One from 17 January 2022
<b>Related Legislation, Australian Standard, NSW Ministry of Health Policy Directive or Guideline, National Safety and Quality Health Service Standard (NSQHSS) and/or other, HNE Health Document, Professional Guideline, Code of Practice or Ethics:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Communicable Disease Network Australia (CDNA)</a></li> </ul>	
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<b>This document contains advice on therapeutics</b>	No
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Note: Over time links in this document may cease working. Where this occurs please source the document in the PPG Directory at: <http://ppg.hne.health.nsw.gov.au/>

## GLOSSARY

Acronym or Term	Definition
COVID-19 symptoms	Includes fever ( $\geq 37.5^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) or history of fever (e.g. night sweats, chills); acute respiratory infection (e.g. cough, shortness of breath, sore throat); loss of smell or loss of taste  Other non-specific symptoms include: fatigue, headache, runny nose, acute blocked nose (congestion), muscle pain, joint pain, diarrhoea, nausea/vomiting and loss of appetite.
PCR test	Polymerase chain reaction
RAT	Rapid antigen test
Unvaccinated	Vaccination status is unknown or not completed as per the approved dosing schedule; those who have received vaccination with a vaccine not registered or recognised by the TGA.

## PURPOSE AND RISKS

This guideline outlines the type of SARS-CoV-2 tests available and provides guidance on the most appropriate test for people requiring COVID-19 testing at community test clinics within HNELHD. People at higher risk of severe illness are encouraged to obtain a PCR test to help provide early access to treatment. A rapid antigen test patient information sheet is included.

**Risk Category:** Clinical Care & Patient Safety

## 1. Testing regime

Due to significant pressures on NSW Pathology laboratories in HNE, COVID-19 PCR testing is currently only available for specific cohorts where a definitive PCR result changes management.

PCR testing is recommended for:

- Anyone who has acute respiratory symptoms compatible with COVID-19 but is RAT negative
- People at higher risk of severe illness who have symptoms and have been recently exposed to someone with COVID-19.
- You are a household contact or have had a high or moderate risk exposure to someone with COVID-19.
- People with higher risk of severe disease include:
  - People aged 60 years and older
  - Pregnant women
  - Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Pacific Islander people (from age 35 years and over)
  - People with obesity, diabetes, serious cardiovascular disease, chronic lung disease, severe chronic liver or kidney disease, active cancer or who are immunocompromised
  - Some people with a disability including those with a disability that affects their lungs, heart or immune system
  - Residents of aged care and disability care facilities
  - People aged 18 years and older who are unvaccinated
- People who have ongoing COVID-19 symptoms and whose diagnosis was not confirmed by a PCR

- People who have been directed to by a health professional
- Symptomatic 'high-risk workers' such as healthcare workers, aged care workers and disability workers, especially those who require exclusion of COVID-19 for return to work.

All other community members presenting to a testing clinic are to be provided with a rapid antigen testing kit to be performed at home. If a rapid antigen testing kit is not available, PCR should be performed on those attending an appointment.

## 2. SARS-CoV-2 Test Information

The following table outlines the types of SARS-CoV-2 tests available and locations of laboratories providing a service to HNELHD facilities:

Test (turn-around time)	Summary	Collection Procedure	Laboratory Location
Standard PCR (24-48 hours)	High sensitivity and specificity with positive results most likely indicating infection – almost no occurrences of false positives.	Deep nose and throat swab	<u>NSW Health Pathology</u> JHH, Tamworth
Rapid PCR E.g. Xpert Xpress assay, Roche LIAT  (1-4 hours)	An RT-PCR test that provides an urgent result in 1-4 hours.  High sensitivity and specificity with positive results most likely indicating infection – almost no occurrences of false positives.	Deep nose and throat swab	<u>NSW Health Pathology</u> Armidale, Belmont, Calvary Mater, JHH, Maitland, Manning, Tamworth  <u>St Vincent's Pathology</u> Moree, Narrabri
Rapid Antigen Test (RAT)  (10-15 minutes)	Detects viral antigen specific to SARS-CoV-2, the presence of which implies infection. Caution: Recent research during the Omicron wave suggests a decrease of <50% sensitivity with RATs even with high viral loads ( <a href="#">Juni et al 2022</a> ).	Nasal swab	Point of care testing only

Note: a positive RAT is considered a positive case, and does not require a confirmation PCR. A positive rapid antigen test must be registered with Service NSW either on the website, app or by calling 13 77 88

## IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING COMPLIANCE AND AUDIT

1. This guideline and its roles and responsibilities are to be communicated to all relevant staff via Executive Directors, General Managers and Director of Medical Services.
2. The document will be communicated via the CE News and be available on the PPG and COVID-19 Intranet pages.
3. The leadership team who has approved the guideline are responsible for ensuring timely and effective review of the guideline. Evaluation will require ongoing review of the most current evidence as well as consideration of HNELHD service capabilities in the implementation of the clinical guideline.

## Appendix 2: Information for Covid-19 testing clinic staff

NSW Health

Fact sheet



## Information for COVID-19 testing clinic staff

NSW Health is encouraging people at higher risk of severe illness to get a PCR test as this will help provide early access to treatment for those who need it most. Please read this information in conjunction with the [‘What COVID-19 test should I do?’](#) fact sheet.

### Who is at higher risk of severe illness?

- People aged 60 years and older
- Pregnant women
- Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Pacific Islander people (from age 35 years and over)
- People with obesity, diabetes, serious cardiovascular disease, chronic lung disease, severe chronic liver or kidney disease, active cancer or who are immunocompromised
- Some people with a disability including those with a disability that affects their lungs, heart or immune system
- Residents of aged care and disability care facilities
- People aged 18 years and older who are unvaccinated

### Who should get a PCR test?

- People at higher risk of severe illness who have symptoms or have been recently exposed to someone with COVID-19
- People who have ongoing COVID-19 symptoms
- People who have been directed to by a health professional

### Who can do a rapid antigen test?

- People who are not at higher risk of severe illness
- Household contacts who must test as soon as possible and Day 6
- People attending a crowded event or gathering, or before visiting a loved one at higher risk of severe illness
- People arriving from overseas (passengers and flight crew).

### What happens if your test is positive?

- You must self-isolate for 7 days and follow the advice on the NSW Health website for [testing positive to COVID-19 and managing COVID-19 at home](#).
- A positive rapid antigen test must be registered with Service NSW either on the website, app or by calling 13 77 88. More information is available on the [Service NSW website](#).

## Rapid Antigen Test

Rapid antigen tests are now being distributed to symptomatic people at some HNE testing clinics. Staff will use a risk matrix to identify if you require a rapid antigen test or PCR test. People at higher risk of severe illness are advised to have a PCR test to provide early access to treatment.

### What is a rapid antigen test?

A rapid antigen test is self-administered and is a quick way to detect COVID-19 with results available within 10-20 minutes.

### What happens if the rapid antigen test is negative?

If you are a household contact or classified as a high risk exposure you need to continue to isolate for 7 days. You must follow the advice for people exposed to COVID-19 to determine your risk.

If you have symptoms, please take another rapid antigen test in 24 hours or have a PCR test. If your second test is positive, you are considered a confirmed case. If your second test is negative, you should isolate until your symptoms have gone. If your symptoms increase, please discuss with your doctor.

### What happens if the rapid antigen test is positive?

If you test positive on a rapid antigen test you are a confirmed case of COVID-19. You need to isolate for at least 7 days, notify your household, social contacts and workplace/school and follow all requirements for [people testing positive for COVID-19](#).

You need to register your positive result as soon as possible by visiting the Service NSW app or website. This will allow NSW Health to connect you to the best care and recovery plan appropriate for you.

Most people will be able to care for themselves at home with rest, regular over the counter pain relief (e.g. paracetamol and ibuprofen), throat lozenges for sore throat and regular fluids to remain hydrated. If you have a chronic condition or are pregnant, please contact your GP or the NSW Health COVID-19 Care at Home Support Line on 1800 960 933. There are effective treatments available for people at risk of severe disease from COVID-19.

If at any time your symptoms increase and you are concerned, please contact your GP or the NSW Health COVID-19 Care at Home Support Line on 1800 960 933. If you develop severe symptoms (particularly severe dizziness, drowsy or confused, suffering shortness of breath, chest pressure or pain lasting more than 10 minutes, unable to stand) call triple zero (000) straight away and tell the ambulance staff you have been diagnosed with COVID-19.

Use the following QR code to find information on testing, isolation and managing COVID-19

