

Testing Guidance for Businesses

Context

Testing needs to be considered as one tool for preventing COVID-19 spread in the workplace, and protecting employees.

Non-public-health-led asymptomatic screening testing for COVID-19 may be deployed in a specific workplace during the period of high community transmission to support workforce planning and maintaining business continuity.

Testing approach

Symptomatic testing: follow standard public health guidance as per targeted testing for people with COVID-19-compatible symptoms.

Asymptomatic screening: not recommended under low community transmission.

Infection Prevention Control (IPC) and managing sickness

The most important protective measures against COVID-19 and other respiratory pathogens in the workplace is to ensure that

- employees are supported to stay home when they have onset of respiratory symptoms
- mask wearing is encouraged for those working in close contact with others who may spread the virus
- vaccination status is up-to-date
- hygiene practices are promoted; and
- there is good ventilation in the workplace.

Workplace IPC precautions including ventilation should be considered before introducing asymptomatic testing.

Public-health-led guidance should be followed for those with COVID-19-compatible symptoms, and are a contact of a confirmed case.

Employer-led asymptomatic screening testing programmes

Testing needs to be considered in the context of being one tool in relation to prevention of COVID-19 in the workplace and protection of employees.

Employers should seek expert advice when considering a testing programme outside the recommended public-health-led testing response.

Consideration should be given to:

- purpose of the testing programme, and its intended benefits for the organisation and employees (including environmental objectives)
- who will run the testing programme, and who will be responsible for testing quality and safety, capturing/securing and communicating its results (to employees, management,

and public health authorities if required) if the programme is not delivered by an accredited testing laboratory

- choice of self-testing before work or on site
- method of capturing and verifying the results
- criteria for selecting who will be tested (for example, all or only identified groups of employees and contractors)
- testing-related provisions for employees off-shift or on leave
- public health reporting and investigation protocols
- screening testing devices and/or testing platforms used (noting how to optimise their use, understanding limitations of their performance, actions to be taken based on a test screening result, sample collection techniques, community transmission rates, and resourcing implications)
- identification of staff with COVID-19-compatible symptoms so they can be supported and appropriately managed
- for non-laboratory-based testing - how positive (detections) or symptomatic negative results will be managed
- financial benefits and returns for the employer
- decision and communication process for standing up and standing down a workplace asymptomatic testing programme; and
- choice of mandatory or voluntary testing.

If there are collection or laboratory service constraints and/or supply chain shortages for antigen testing, consideration should be given to suspending **all** low-priority testing (laboratory PCR and RAT). Low-priority testing may increase testing wait times for priority population groups.