

Personal Care Home COVID-19 Protocols and Asymptomatic Testing Frequently Asked Questions – Answering Questions from Resident/Staff Families

What is asymptomatic testing?

Asymptomatic surveillance testing is being implemented at a number of personal care homes (PCHs) as an additional preventative measure in efforts to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Asymptomatic testing refers to tests completed on individuals who do not have any symptoms of COVID-19 or any known exposure.

What is asymptomatic surveillance testing in a personal care home?

Within participating Manitoba PCHs, staff with no symptoms or known exposure to COVID-19 will have access to rapid COVID-19 testing once per week.

Testing is voluntary. The test uses the Abbot Panbio COVID-19 rapid antigen test which can provide a result in approximately 20 minutes.

Is this a requirement of staff?

Participation is voluntary however all eligible staff are being encouraged to participate in this important preventative initiative.

What happens if a test is positive?

Staff who test positive will be considered probable positive and their results will be confirmed by a laboratory test.

Staff who test “probable positive” must isolate pending the confirmatory test.

If the test is confirmed by the lab to be positive, the staff member will continue following the directions of public health and occupational health services or designate until they are cleared to return to work.

Are all staff eligible?

Staff with no COVID-19 symptoms and no known exposure to the virus are eligible to be tested once per week.

Staff who have been deemed “recovered” for COVID-19 by Public Health or Infection Prevention & Control (IPC) within the past 90 days are not included within this initiative.

Are residents or designated family care providers eligible?

No. At this time, rapid testing for asymptomatic surveillance is limited to PCH staff.

Why is this testing limited to staff?

Testing is only one part of the effort to reduce spread of COVID-19 and is an additional preventative measure being implemented at some PCHs.

Test results only represent the status of an individual at the time of testing and negative test results do not eliminate the need for all the other preventive measures, as a person could become positive after the test was completed.

Preventative measures – staff screening, visitor screening and restrictions, enhanced cleaning, use of appropriate PPE – all remain in place.

Do you test PCH staff regularly for COVID-19?

Rapid Testing of Asymptomatic Staff is being implemented as an additional tool at participating PCHs.

Testing continues to be prioritized for symptomatic residents and staff. Additionally, when a case of COVID-19 is identified and an outbreak is declared in a PCH, testing of exposed residents and staff occurs. In these circumstances, close contacts of a positive case as well as groups of staff and residents most likely to have come into contact with the case are the first priority for testing. This includes contacts (residents or staff) who do not have symptoms of COVID-19. Expanded testing occurs if more cases are identified through the initial round of testing.

With the identification of a positive case of COVID-19 in the PCH, what efforts are underway to protect residents and staff?

- When a resident or staff member tests positive for COVID-19, contact tracing begins immediately and affected staff are excluded from entering the facility. Symptomatic staff and residents as well as those most likely to have come in contact with the case are the first priority for COVID-19 testing, and testing will extend beyond this group if more cases are confirmed following the first round of testing.
- The COVID-19 positive resident is isolated to their room as much as possible.
- Close contacts of the COVID-19 positive resident or staff are isolated to their rooms as much as possible
- Where a number of residents test positive, they will be grouped together as much as possible away from other residents in order to better protect against spread.
- Additional staffing is put in place, as required, to ensure all resident needs are met. Our facility works with the regional health authority and the provincial COVID-19 response team to ensure timely access to additional support if we experience a significant increase in resident need or in staff sick calls.

Staffing Screening and PPE

- Staff screening (a standard five question screening process to identify symptoms or exposure) continues to occur prior to each shift and staff are required to remain at home if they develop symptoms.
- Staff have access to, and wear, personal protective equipment (PPE) that is appropriate for their work setting and the care they provide.
- A PCH experiencing an outbreak will have regular, ongoing contact with the region's long-term care and public health teams to review the needs of the day, to receive support in troubleshooting and to be assigned additional supports as needed.