

# COVID-19 RAPID ANTIGEN TESTING – Essential Caregiver Visitors and General Visitors County of Elgin Long-Term Care Homes

To: Families, Substitute Decision-Makers of County of Elgin Long-Term Care Homes

From: Michele Harris, Director of Homes and Seniors Services

Date: **April 15, 2021**

Subject: COVID-19 Rapid Antigen Testing – Essential Caregiver Visitors and General Visitors

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Dear Families and substitute decision makers,

Screening and testing for COVID-19 continues to play a central role in the battle against COVID-19. The Ministry of Long-Term Care (MLTC) has mandated screening and testing requirements for staff, residents, essential caregivers, general visitors and support workers to Long-Term Care Homes. Weekly PCR surveillance testing for visitors will be changing to on site “rapid antigen testing” (PanBio).

Rapid antigen testing can be used for point of care screening to detect COVID-19 faster than the regular laboratory-based PCR test for COVID-19. The PanBio screening test will generate a result within 15 – 20 minutes.

The County of Elgin Homes have begun to implement rapid antigen testing for front line staff and are ready to implement for essential caregiver visitors and general visitors (when applicable).

Important points regarding rapid antigen testing for essential caregiver visitors and general visitors:

## **Beginning Monday, April 19, 2021**

- Visitors are asked to have Rapid Antigen testing performed on site at the Home they are visiting. This replaces the requirement for PCR (NP swab) every 7 days, unless the Home communicates otherwise (i.e. outbreak status)
- Current rapid antigen visitor **testing timeframes** are from 10 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. 7 days/week
- Rapid antigen **testing frequency requirements vary by COVID colour** (i.e. grey, red, orange, yellow, green), and outbreak status
- Essential caregiver visitors and general visitors will be required to provide a written consent with the first rapid antigen test and verbal consent with each additional test
- A reminder that general visitors are currently only permitted to visit in “Green”



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- Testing methods/options include nasopharyngeal, deep nasal, anterior nasal, and combined throat/nose swab. The health professional performing the test will discuss these options with you and assess for the most appropriate swab method
- Rapid antigen **testing frequency requirements for “yellow, orange, red and grey”** are as follows:
  - 1 time per week if visiting only once in 7 days
  - 2 times per week if visiting 2 times in 7 days
  - 3 times per week if visiting 3+ times in 7 days
  - Testing is not required to be conducted on two consecutive days – e.g. if you are visiting Saturday and Sunday – you will only be required to be tested on the first day (Saturday). You will be provided with a “test confirmation card” after you are tested on the first day.
- Upon arrival to the Home the visitor attendant will screen the visitor, ask questions utilizing an algorithm to determine if you require to be tested that day, and, if so, ask that you wait in the designated area for your rapid antigen testing. This will be a busy time for the visitor attendant and health professional doing the testing, and, as such, we request that visitors demonstrate patience upon arrival to the Home to ensure appropriate timing of required testing.
- After the rapid antigen test is performed, the visitor may proceed with their visit (with appropriate personal protective equipment) while awaiting the rapid antigen test results.

## **Test results:**

- If the rapid antigen test result is negative – the visitor will be permitted to continue the visit
- If the rapid antigen test result is inconclusive – the visitor will be required to have the rapid antigen testing repeated by the health professional immediately. The visitor will be asked to await test results before resuming their visit
- If the rapid antigen test result is positive – the visitor will be directed to return home to self-isolate, contact their local public health for direction, and, make an appointment at a local assessment centre to be swabbed (PCR nasopharyngeal swab) by a regulated health care provider.
- The Home is required to report all positive rapid antigen tests to the local public health



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It is expected that there will be changes to the testing requirements and process during the course of the pandemic, and the Homes shall communicate changes through one or more of the following avenues:

- County of Elgin Homes website
- Weekly newspaper Ads – Aylmer Express, West Elgin Chronicle
- Email communications to family members from Manager of Program and Therapy – if you wish to be added to the email communications, please email [tnoble@elgin.ca](mailto:tnoble@elgin.ca)
- Electronic message board at the entrance to the Home(s)
- Monthly newsletter inserted in the monthly billing
- Visitor attendant and/or health professional conducting the testing

If you have any questions regarding visiting, screening or testing requirements please feel free to speak to a manager of the Home.

Sincerely,

Michele Harris



**ElginCounty**  
*Progressive by Nature*