

What You Need to Know about the Pilot Project on the Rapid Antigen Diagnostic Test (antigen test) for COVID-19

You are being invited to join a four-week project to look at how we could use antigen tests to identify COVID-19 in third level education and the early learning and childcare sector. This leaflet explains all about the project.

Who is doing this project?

Two government departments are doing this project with the HSE:

- The Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science
- The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, integration and Youth

Why is this pilot project happening?

This pilot will help the Departments and the HSE learn more about how antigen tests might be used more widely in third-level and early learning and childcare settings.

What is an antigen test?

An antigen test is a test can be used to detect the virus that causes COVID-19.

What is the difference between a PCR test and an antigen test?

The COVID-19 test used in Ireland generally is a PCR test. This is the most reliable test available because it looks at the genetic material of the virus. It is done in a lab and is a very reliable way of knowing if you are currently infected with COVID-19. A swab is taken from the inside of a person's nose and throat and sent to a lab. But it takes 1 or 2 days to get the result.

Antigen tests do not have to be done in a lab. They can be done at home or at work. They provide results within 15 minutes, so they can help identify COVID-19 infections quickly.

Antigen tests can detect COVID-19 whether or not you have symptoms, but they are less sensitive if you have no symptoms. This is why it is important to test 2-3 times

per week. If they are used this way, it makes them more effective in picking up COVID-19 cases earlier.

Who can take part in the pilot project?

You can take part in this project if you are:

- a student in third level education
- staff at a third level education site
- staff at an early years education site

Do I have to take part in this project?

No. You do not have to take part in this project.

Can I take part in the project if I have had COVID-19, have symptoms or are self-isolating?

No. It is important that you do **not** take part if you:

- have tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 9 months
- have symptoms of COVID-19 – you should self-isolate immediately and arrange a PCR test
- are self-isolating because you have been identified as a close contact of a person who has been confirmed as having COVID-19

When is the pilot project happening?

The pilot project will start on [[insert date](#)] and will run for four weeks.

What is involved if I decide I want to take part?

Participants in the pilot project will be asked to:

- Read the instructions and information provided with the antigen test kits and watch a video that explains how to carry out the test at home.
- Do the tests at home on 2 days a week in the morning before coming in to work or college. The lead person at your workplace or college will tell you which days you should do the tests.
- Report all your antigen test results on the HSE Report your Antigen webpage. You will be given the link to this page before you start your antigen tests.

To do the test, you will take a swab from both nostrils. Use the test kit according to the manufacturer's instructions to process your results. The test is painless, but it may be a little uncomfortable to do. The test takes 5 minutes to complete, and you can read the results after 15 minutes.

More information on the test kit is available at <https://www.clinitest.siemens-healthineers.com/en>. This webpage has:

- written instructions
- a video about how to use the test (2.48 minutes)
- a 'Frequently Asked Questions' section that gives lots of useful information.

If you decide to take part in the pilot project, you will be given test kits to bring home with you and use for four weeks. When you take the test kits home, you will need to:

- follow the manufacturer's instructions about how to use the tests
- store the test kits safely
- get rid of the test kits appropriately when you are finished.

What if the antigen result shows Detected (Positive)? What do I do then?

If your antigen test result is Detected (Positive), you need to self-isolate and have a PCR test to confirm if you do have COVID-19, and you will not be able to go to work or college while you wait for the results of that test. To report your positive result and arrange a PCR test, go to the HSE Report your Antigen webpage.

If you have any difficulty booking a PCR test on the website, you can also arrange a test by:

- Attending a walk-in test centre **or**
- Contacting your GP

If your PCR test is positive, the Department of Public Health may need to tell your employer or college for the safety and well-being of others.

What are the advantages of taking part?

- Taking regular antigen tests may help identify cases of COVID-19 earlier and prevent the spread of infection
- The results of the project will help us understand:
 - how easy or difficult it is to do regular antigen tests
 - if it is practical to continue an antigen testing programme

What are the disadvantages of taking part?

- Antigen tests are not fully accurate.
 - You could get a Detected (Positive) result and then find out after your PCR test that you don't have COVID-19. This could cause unnecessary disruption and worry for you or your family.
 - You could get a Not-detected (Negative) result but still have COVID-19, which could give you a false sense of security – that is why it is really important that everyone continues to follow the public health advice.
- The antigen test requires you to take a swab from your nose twice a week. You may find this uncomfortable and tiresome to keep doing. However, if you would like to stop taking part in the project, you can stop at any time. You don't have to continue for the full four weeks.

What happens if I don't want to be part of the pilot project?

- You are not required to participate in this pilot project. It is completely voluntary.
- If you decide to take part and then later change your mind, you can leave at any stage.
- There will be no negative consequences for you at work or college if you decide not to take part.
- If you choose not to take part, it will not affect your healthcare by the HSE in any way, now or in the future.

How do I register for the pilot project?

If you want to register to take part in the pilot project, please complete the Registration and Consent form and return it to [[Insert name or email](#)] by [[insert date](#)].

If you have a question or concern about taking part, please contact [[Insert name or email](#)]

Thank you for reading this information.

The Health Service Executive

The Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science

The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth