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.

If my test is negative do I need to wear PPE?

Yes. All personal protective equipment must continue to be worn and IPC protocols adhered to.
Testing is only one part of the effort to reduce spread of COVID-19. Test results only represent the status of an individual at the time of testing. 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.

If my test is negative, am I required to undergo staff screening on the other days I work during the same week?

Yes, daily staff screening remains an important and necessary preventative measure. Staff must screen every day. If you develop any symptoms, you are required to stay home from work.

If I participate in this voluntary testing am I required to isolate? Are members of my family required to isolate?

Staff - No, participation in this surveillance testing is voluntary and does not require staff to self-isolate unless a positive test result is received.

Household Members – No, people who live with a staff member who is participating in this surveillance testing do not need to self-isolate unless they have been directed to by public health officials. If a positive test result is received, staff and their close contacts will receive specific instructions/direction from public health.

What happens to my pay if I voluntary undergo Rapid Asymptomatic testing and my result is positive?

If you receive a positive test result, your result will be reported to Public Health and you will be required to contact Occupational Health Services or designate. Contact tracing will also begin immediately.

If your exposure is determined to be work-related, you are entitled to receive paid administrative leave for the days you would have worked but are required to isolate.

If your exposure is determined to be non-work-related, you will be placed on a leave of absence for the duration of your isolation. You can use your income protection banks (i.e., sick banks), vacation and/or general holiday/overtime banks for this time frame. If you do not have remaining time in those banks, you will be placed on an unpaid leave until you are cleared to return to work.

Is this different from how my pay would be managed if I had symptoms and tested positive for COVID-19?

No. Regardless of whether or not you have symptoms, if you are required to self-isolate due to a non-work-related exposure you will be placed on a leave of absence. Please be assured that during this time you can use your income protection banks (i.e., sick banks), vacation and/or general holiday/overtime banks or if there is no time in those banks, you will be placed on an unpaid leave.
If you are required to self-isolate due to a work-related exposure and you are asymptomatic, you are entitled to receive paid administrative leave for the days you would have been scheduled up to a period of 14 days or until you are cleared to return to work. If you develop COVID symptoms while you are isolating you will be entitled to apply for WCB benefits.

**Are all PCH testing 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.

**Why are other PCHs not implementing rapid asymptomatic surveillance testing?**

Rapid testing is an additional tool in the fight against COVID-19.

Many PCHs have expressed interest in participating in this initiative and it is being rolled out gradually as sites prepare supplies, staffing and space.

**What happens if our facility experiences an outbreak of COVID-19? Will we still be tested?**

If a positive case of COVID-19 is confirmed at a PCH, all normal precautions and outbreak protocols will be implemented. Consideration of whether asymptomatic surveillance testing of staff will continue will be determined in collaboration with Public Health and Infection Prevention and Control.

**Nasal Swab questions**

**Are Home Kits for self-testing for COVID-19 being considered?**

The Provincial asymptomatic rapid testing surveillance in PCHs using Panbio rapid antigen tests is designed to conduct asymptomatic staff screening only. Symptomatic staff should not attend work and go to COVID testing sites for testing. Panbio is currently not authorized by Health Canada to be used as self-test. Nasal self-swabbing option at point of care testing offered in PCH under the direction and supervision of a trained health care professional is acceptable by Health Canada's authorization under the Interim Order and has now been incorporated in the Provincial asymptomatic rapid testing surveillance program extended pilot as an option for staff. However completing the rapid testing and reading the test results is still to be done by trained health care staff and the process is overseen by a Regulated Health Care Professional, and evaluated by a pilot leadership group. Accredited health care organizations are held to various regulatory and quality standards and testing results have implications for the staff, residents,
Why is the option of using a nasal swab for asymptomatic PCH Staff testing being offered?
Some staff provided feedback that they weren’t going for asymptomatic testing because the nasopharyngeal swab was uncomfortable for them. PCHs now have the option of using nasal swabs in an effort to encourage more staff to participate in asymptomatic rapid testing.

What is the difference between the nasal swab and the nasopharyngeal swab?
A nasal swab and a nasopharyngeal swab are both acceptable methods for collecting a sample of nasal secretions. Both are inserted into the nose. The nasopharyngeal swab is slimmer and longer. It is also called a deep nasal swab and is inserted all the way to the back of the nasal cavity where it joins the throat. The nasal swab is generally fatter and made of more absorbent material. It is inserted less than an inch into the nose, just before the narrowing of the nasal passages.

If we get a nasal swab, do both nostrils need to be swabbed?
Yes, a nasal swab requires swabbing in both nostrils.

Is there a difference in sensitivity of the test based on using the nasal swab vs a nasopharyngeal swab?
Sensitivity measures how often a test correctly generates a positive result for people who have the condition that’s being tested for (also known as the “true positive” rate). The nasal swab is slightly less sensitive, but is still an effective strategy for asymptomatic testing to identify possible COVID-19 infection. Also, if it encourages more participation, there is benefit to residents and staff at the PCH!

Who is allowed to collect a nasal swab?
Nasal swabs can be collected by Regulated Health Professionals and by support staff who have had training. Support staff who receive Red River college training and who work under the direct supervision of Regulated Health Care professional staff can do nasal swabbing, running the test and communication of negative results. Positive and invalid results will be communicated by the Regulated Health Care professional. Staff can also choose to do a self-swab in front of the clinic staff.

Can the support staff run the test using the Abbott Panbio test?
Yes, support staff who receive Red River college training and who work under the direct supervision of a Regulated Health Care Professional staff can run the test.

Why do support staff who have been trained on collecting the nasal swab and the Abbott Panbio Test device require direct supervision from a regulated healthcare professional?
Regulated Health Care professionals provide support and guidance to the trained support staff. Certain tasks (e.g. making a diagnosis, communicating a diagnosis) are reserved acts in Manitoba and covered by legislation. Therefore, support staff who have received formal training are only permitted to perform these tests under delegation by Regulated Health Care professional.
What is the training required to collect a nasal swab?
Support staff are required to take training through Red River Community College. Registered individuals will receive access to the virtual platform and will have 7 days to complete the virtual training at their own pace. Training takes approximately 2 hours and provides an overview of the device and how to swab. After this training is complete, site specific orientation occurs. Regulated Health Care providers can review the training video by Abbott for collection of a nasal swab. These staff have also received specific training from the service delivery organization on the operation of the Abbott Panbio Test Device.

What if my site chooses not to switch to using the nasal swab?
Nasopharyngeal swabs remain an option for all sites. The Abobott Panbio COVID-19 rapid antigen test can be used with either a nasopharyngeal swab or a nasal swab.