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**Rapid Antigen Testing Policy**

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**We have had several queries regarding the use of the Rapid Antigen Tests (RAT). The RAT involves a swab of only the front of the nose and can be easily self-administered, in comparison to the PCR test for COVID-19 which is a molecular test administered by healthcare professionals.**

RAT is not mandatory for businesses. It is an optional layer of protection and an added tool that can run alongside other strategies implemented in the workplace, for preventing the spread of COVID-19. Other methods ideally already in place are vaccination, PPE and regular hand washing etc.

Businesses wanting to use RAT within their business, will have to pay purchase it for it themselves [**you can place an order here**](https://www.restaurantnz.co.nz/product/orient-gene-rapid-antigen-covid-19-test-5-pack/)**.**

Please note that RAT operates as a method of surveillance testing only under this policy. If an employee receives a positive RAT result it does not need to be confirmed with a PCR unless advised.

Once you have decided to use RAT as a tool within your business, you will need to consider:

* When you will be requiring an employee to take a RAT
* The frequency of RAT
* How and where the test will be done
* Whether you will require the employee to show you proof of the RAT result
* And how you will record this information.

For this reason, we have created a workplace policy for our members that clearly communicates the process and expectations that an employee can have if they are required to take a RAT and what happens if they receive a positive result.

The content highlighted below requires you to personalise the policy to your business and process. We recommend that you fill this out and send it back to our helpline team to review before issuing to employees.

**RAPID ANTIGEN TESTING PROTOCOL**

**PURPOSE**

The Employer has identified COVID-19 as a hazard that may arise in the workplace.

The Employer has previously put controls in place to, so far as is reasonably practicable, eliminate or minimise the risk of transmission and infection due to COVID-19 in the workplace.

The Employer has identified a further control which will assist in minimising the transmission of COVID-19.

Surveillance rapid antigen testing (**RAT**) is a further layer of protection that can run alongside other controls that prevent or minimise the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace.

The use of RAT is not, however, a complete solution or ‘magic bullet’ in respect of COVID-19. RAT does not replace alternative minimisation measures, such as personal protective equipment/PPE use, practicing hand hygiene, mask wearing, scanning in with the COVID-19 tracing app and other workplace cleaning and hygiene practices. These measures are still required to be in place while at work.

**SCOPE**

This protocol applies to all workers who work for or whose activities in carrying out work are influenced or directed by the Employer, including but not limited to employees, contracted service providers, and volunteers.

**PROTOCOL**

1. If you have cold, flu or COVID-19 symptoms (as outlined below), you should not come into work.

Symptoms can include one or more of the following:

* a new or worsening cough
* sneezing and runny nose
* a fever
* temporary loss of smell or altered sense of taste
* sore throat
* shortness of breath.

Less common symptoms of COVID-19 may include diarrhoea, headache, muscle aches, nausea, vomiting, malaise, chest pain, abdominal pain, joint pain or confusion/irritability. These almost always occur with one or more of the common symptoms.

The Ministry of Health advises that symptoms tend to arise around two to five days after a person has been infected but can take up to 14 days to show. The virus can be passed onto others before they know they have it – from up to two days before symptoms develop.

1. You should only get a COVID-19 test if you feel unwell or if you are a close contact of a confirmed COVID-19 case. The advice to get a test if you have symptoms still stands. If you are unsure whether you need a test, contact your General Practitioner or call Healthline (for free) on 0800 358 5453.
2. When is RAT required by the Employer under this Protocol?

[Employer to complete: choose any that will apply]

* Testing before entering a workplace
* Testing before travel
* Testing those who may have been close contacts
* As a return-to-work test (after having COVID)
* Testing new employees
* Testing non-vaccinated employee
* Testing contractors.

1. The cost of the RAT will be covered by the Employer when it requires a RAT to be administered in accordance with this Protocol.
2. The RAT will use one of the types of RATs approved for use in New Zealand (in accordance with Ministry of Health advice).
3. [Employer to complete: What is the RAT frequency?]
4. [Employer to complete: Who will conduct the testing/what is the location i.e. home or work? How is the tester trained? What PPE will be supplied to the tester? ]
5. All individuals self-administering a RAT, or administering a RAT to another person, will have received authorized direction / training on proper test administration protocol. You can find out more about how to take a RAT test here: [How to take an Orient Gene Rapid Lateral Flow COVID-19 test - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MMvr4VDxmEo&t=24s)
6. The collection / self-collection of specimens, proper handling of specimens, documentation and reporting of results, required actions depending upon results, and appropriate disposal of specimens, kits and other contaminated materials must follow the authorized protocols per the RAT manufacturer’s instructions, and directives per the MOH.
7. [Employer to complete: How are test results to be supplied to the Employer, and recorded? Phone call; photo of result; email and/or text follow up; where will this be recorded?]]
8. **Positive Result or Indeterminate/Invalid result**

If you return a **positive** RAT result, or an **indeterminate/invalid** RAT result then:

1. Inform the Employer by telephone, and then confirm the result by text message and/or email.
2. Dispose of the RAT in a zip-lock bag in normal rubbish.
3. Check with your healthcare professional as to whether you are required to take a PCR test.
4. You must self-isolate immediately, so that you can help break chains of transmission and limit the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace.
5. The Employer will discuss what arrangements may be put in place during your absence from the workplace.
6. **Negative Result**

Where you receive a **negative** RAT result:

1. Confirm the result with the Employer by text message and/or email.
2. Dispose of the RAT in a zip-lock bag in normal rubbish.
3. Go to work. If you develop any symptoms after taking a RAT, even if mild, you must immediately get a standard COVID-19 test and isolate until a negative result is returned.
4. **Employee Refusal**

The refusal to take a RAT may be deemed a refusal to comply with the Employer’s health and safety policy.

The Employer may commence a disciplinary process in respect of any refusal to comply with this protocol.

1. **Privacy**

The results of RAT will be collected by the Employer to help it meet its health and safety obligations to its workers and other persons in the workplace.

The RAT results will be stored securely, and accessed by the Employer to implement this protocol, and to discharge its health and safety obligations to workers and others who may be in the workplace.

Testing data from RAT may be disclosed to Ministry of Health where it is requested by the Ministry, and the disclosure rules in the Privacy Act 2020 are met. Where possible, the Employer will seek to anonymise any personal information sought by the Ministry of Health.

1. The Employer reserves the right to review, amend or replace this RAT protocol at any time.