

November 5, 2021

To: Parents/Guardians and Students

SUBJECT: Update on PCR and rapid antigen COVID-19 testing options for students

The Ministries of Education and Health have launched several school-based testing initiatives for the 2021-2022 school year. This letter describes the two types of tests available for schools.

What are the differences between rapid antigen tests and PCR tests?

Rapid antigen tests can be done at home. The test screens people without symptoms for COVID-19 in 15 minutes. They are NOT as accurate as the PCR tests used to diagnose COVID-19.

IMPORTANT: Do NOT use rapid antigen tests if your child is symptomatic or has had a known exposure to COVID-19.

Laboratory PCR tests are used in these instances. Results return within 24-48 hours.

Where can my child get a saliva PCR diagnostic test in Peel region?

There are 7 testing locations in Peel that offer saliva PCR testing. For further information on locations and hours, please check our website: [Getting tested for COVID-19 - Region of Peel \(peelregion.ca\)](https://www.peelregion.ca/health-services/getting-tested-for-covid-19)

How will rapid antigen screening be used in schools?

Peel Public Health will identify schools at higher risk of COVID-19 infection and offer voluntary rapid antigen screening tests for non-exposed children. Screening unvaccinated children who do not show symptoms provides an additional layer of protection against the COVID-19 virus.

School selection criteria include:

- Schools with multiple dismissals and/or an outbreak
- Before or after a school closure

Interested families will receive rapid antigen screening test kits to be completed at home for children attending school who:

- Are unvaccinated and do not have COVID-19 symptoms
- Have no known COVID-19 exposures (e.g. not part of an isolating classroom)

Children isolating at home from a COVID-19 exposure are not eligible and should get a PCR diagnostic test to check for COVID-19 infection.

**Health
Services**

Office of the
Medical Officer
of Health

PO Box 667
RPO Streetsville
Mississauga, ON
L5M 2C2
tel: 905-799-7700

peelregion.ca

Your family will be notified directly if your school is eligible for the rapid antigen screening program and more information will follow. Schools will not have kits to distribute if they do not qualify.

Why are rapid antigen tests not being offered to all unvaccinated children?

Offering tests to people who are at low risk increases the possibility of false positive tests. The Ministry of Health has directed these tests to be used in higher risk situations. Rapid antigen tests do not replace the need for other protective measures in schools.

When will my school receive take home COVID-19 PCR diagnostic tests?

The Ministry of Education has announced that take home COVID-19 PCR diagnostic tests will become available in schools starting in mid-November. Further information will be shared when they are available in Peel region.

For more information on testing options in Peel region, please visit www.peelregion.ca/coronavirus or call 905-799-7700 Monday-Friday from 8:30 am-4:30 pm.

Sincerely,

Peel Public Health