

HWDSB

December 8, 2021

Dear Families,

In an effort to promote a safer return to the classroom after the winter break, on behalf of the Government of Ontario, Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) is pleased to be able to provide take-home rapid antigen screening kits to every child who attends a publicly-funded school in Ontario.

The rapid antigen screening kits are intended for use by any child that attends a publicly funded school, regardless of their vaccination status. Rapid antigen screening kits are to be distributed to students who participate in in-person learning. This testing option will **not** be available to students who have been learning remotely since September 2021.

Please note, your child's participation in this rapid antigen screening is **voluntary**. Students are not required to participate in order to return to the classroom after the winter break.

While providing students with rapid antigen screening kits is an important tool for managing the spread of COVID-19, vaccination remains the most effective protection against the virus and its variants. Ensuring that children and youth are vaccinated will provide them with a strong level of protection and help to keep schools open and as safe as possible.

It is also important to remember that we all need to continue key public health strategies that have been effective in keeping this pandemic under control, including staying home when sick, getting tested if you have symptoms, washing your hands frequently and wearing a face covering as required.

Please read the important information below before using the rapid antigen screening kit.

Distribution of Kits

HWDSB schools will provide students with one package of five tests during the week of December 13 to 17. Schools will notify families using School Messenger on the day that they distribute the kits, to ensure that families receive them. If a student is absent when kits are distributed at their school, the student can pick this up the next day. Testing kits are **not** available at the HWDSB Education Centre.

HWDSB

When to Use the Rapid Antigen Screening Kit (distributed prior to the winter break):

- For students who choose to use rapid antigen screening kits, it is recommended students conduct the rapid antigen tests every 3-4 days over the holiday break, on every Monday and Thursday beginning December 23, until all five tests have been used.
- Rapid antigen screening kits are only to be used when a child is **asymptomatic** (i.e. does not have any symptoms of COVID-19 and has not had any exposure to a confirmed case of COVID-19).
- Anyone with symptoms or who is identified as a close contact of a case should still get PCR testing. Rapid antigen screening tests should not be used as a substitute for PCR tests for people with symptoms or for people who are close contacts of cases.

Using the Take-Home Rapid Antigen Screening Kit:

- The BTNX Rapid Response™ can be performed using anterior nasal swabbing (per the package insert, as approved by Health Canada) or using deep nasal swabbing (as recommended by Public Health Ontario in this document, given higher sensitivity compared to anterior nasal swabbing). Both types of specimen collection can be performed using the NP swab provided with the kit.
- Please follow the instructions provided with this letter.
- **Important note:** Parents or guardians may choose to administer this screening on children who may need help (i.e., younger children).

What to do after your test:

- You will know the outcome of the test within 15 minutes. If test results conducted so far are negative, your child may attend school as usual. Even if your child tests negative, they should continue to adhere to all relevant public health guidance, such as guidance on gathering, distancing, and masking.
- A positive result on a rapid antigen screening test is considered a preliminary positive. A child that receives a positive result on a rapid antigen screening test should seek a confirmatory PCR test as soon as possible (ideally within 48 hours) at a [local testing site](#) or pharmacy that offers testing and isolate themselves until the result of that confirmatory PCR test are known.

Thank you for your cooperation. If you have any questions, please contact your school.

Have a safe and healthy holiday season.