



The Regional
Municipality
of Durham

Social Services
Department

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Dear Family Member,

Rapid Antigen Testing

As mentioned in my last letter to families dated February 1st, all long-term care (LTC) homes in Ontario will be transitioning from the polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test to the Rapid Antigen (RA) test over the next several weeks.

The RA is a screening tool that is used for point-of-care testing to detect COVID-19 in 15 -20 minutes, making it simpler and much faster to identify potential COVID-19 positive cases that may otherwise be missed. Like the PCR test, the RA test will require a swab of the nasal cavity.

A positive result on the RA test is considered a preliminary positive and requires confirmatory laboratory based PCR test.

What Does This Mean for You?

As of February 16th, 'day of' RA testing will be offered for essential caregivers, support workers and general visitors (once permitted). You will be required to undergo this test and obtain a negative result each day you come to the home. Please note that it takes between 15 -20 minutes for the test results to be processed prior to leaving the swabbing area. We will be asking for your verbal consent prior to the test.

Should the RA test show a positive result, a PCR lab test is required to verify. This test can be administered at the LTC home and to do so, we will require your consent for the results to be collected by the LTC home. In order to collect the results, we will require your Ontario Health Card number. You will be instructed to return home and self-isolate until receipt of confirmatory laboratory PCR test results.

As an essential caregiver, you still have the option of a weekly PCR test obtained at your local test centre if it is available. If you choose this, you will still be required to provide proof of a negative PCR test result within the past 7 days and to attest to not subsequently having tested positive.

Given that the LTC home must staff the swabbing desk, we are once again requesting the caregiver visits be held between the hours of 8am and 8pm. This restriction does not apply in the case of end-of-life or critical illness visits. If you must be at the home outside these hours, please contact a member of management and we will try to accommodate.

If you previously tested COVID-19 positive, you may not be required to undergo the RA test. Please consult the Infection Control Practitioner to discuss your situation.

Surveillance testing, active screening, infection prevention and control (IPAC) practices, hand hygiene, physical distancing and use of personal

protective equipment (PPE) are important measures that will help keep long-term care home residents, staff and visitors safe. These measures continue to be in place even if you have received your vaccination.

If you have any questions about the RA test, please speak to a member of the nursing leadership team.

Thank you for your continued commitment to keep our most vulnerable safe during this pandemic.

Laura MacDermaid