



COVID-19

Information for disabled people who employ their own workforce

18 February 2022

More than 3 million Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs) have been distributed across New Zealand for workers who keep New Zealand's critical services and supply chains moving, and those in our community most at risk from the effects of COVID-19.

The deliveries follow the opening of the Close Contact Exemption Scheme and the move to Phase 2 of the Omicron response strategy.

Under the public health response RATs are being prioritised for three groups:

1. The Healthcare, Disability and Emergency Service Workforce including those who work in District Health Boards, GPs, Pharmacies, Aged Residential Care facilities, Police, Corrections, FENZ and Managed Isolation Quarantine Facilities who have been identified as a close contact and need a test to go to work will be given RATs by their employer.
2. Priority populations, who are at heightened risk when symptomatic, will be able to get a supervised RAT from their GP or community provider, who will record the results.

3. Asymptomatic critical workers who are fully vaccinated, have been identified as a close contact and need a test to go to work can get RATs from a collection site as part of the Close Contact Exemption Scheme. This the relevant section for you.

A rapid antigen test (often called a RAT) is generally taken with a front of nose swab. It can be done in hospitals, medical centres, pharmacies, workplaces and at home. Tests can be carried out under supervision, or you can do it yourself.

Rapid antigen test results are available in about 20 minutes compared to 2 to 5 days for a PCR test.

Please remember RATs are not:

- as accurate at detecting COVID-19 as nasal and saliva PCR tests
- used for diagnosis of people with COVID-19 symptoms
- a replacement for existing nasal and saliva PCR tests
- mandatory for businesses
- acceptable for mandatory surveillance testing under the Required Testing Order (RTO)
- a replacement for vaccination.

Information for Employers

At Phase Two:

- Any of your staff with symptoms must isolate and get a test (PCR)
- Identified cases need to isolate for 10 days
- Any of your staff identified as a close contact needs to isolate for seven days (with a PCR test on day five).

If any of your workers have been

- identified as a close contact and
- are vaccinated and
- don't have COVID-19 symptoms

they may be able to continue to work. For this to occur you need to register with the [Close Contact Exemption Scheme](#), as they will be classed as a critical worker while employed by you. Attached is the step-by-step information you need to register for the Close Contact Exemption Scheme.

Step 1: RealMe

1. Click on this link [Close Contact Exemption Scheme](#)
2. You will then be taken to another link <https://services.businessconnect.govt.nz/>
3. This opens up the RealMe login
4. You can either use an existing RealMe login or Create one (**How to apply – RealMe**) this link explains what ID is required

If you need to create a RealMe login, you'll need to provide:

- an email address (this will be confirmed via a six-digit code)
- a username and password
- your contact details and
- three security questions (security questions are used if you forget your password or username to help you regain access).

No photos or birth certificates required. That is for a Verified RealMe which is not needed in this case.

Step 2: Business Connect

Once you have logged in to RealMe, you can then set up your account with Business Connect following these steps:

1. Verify your account (you will be prompted to do this)
2. Choose the Covid19 Close Contact Exemption Scheme Register
 - a. if you have a NZBN (New Zealand Business Number) then enter that OR
 - b. choose the sole trader option and click "No" for NZBN
 - c. choose Health as the category
3. Follow the questions and at the end you will receive an email with your registration number. You can then provide your support workers with this email.

In addition to registering, for your employee to get a RAT you will need to provide them with a critical workforce authorisation letter.

Step 3: Critical Workforce Authorisation Letter

Below is an example of what you need to provide to your employee as their employer.

Date

Employee Name:

Job Title:

Confirmation of Essential worker

The purpose of this letter is to confirm that the above-mentioned person is employed as deemed a critical disability support worker in the context of the Omicron response, that is,

- a health and disability service that provides direct, hands-on care and support that maintains a person's necessities of life AND
- a health and disability service that enables the delivery of equitable care to those people most at risk of harm.

The definitions can be found here: [Guidance for critical health services during an Omicron outbreak](https://www.health.govt.nz/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-information-health-professionals/guidance-critical-health-services-during-omicron-outbreak#critical-worker)
<https://www.health.govt.nz/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-information-health-professionals/guidance-critical-health-services-during-omicron-outbreak#critical-worker>

The person noted above has been identified as a close contact and as their employer I wish them to take a 'Test to Return' approach whilst they are asymptomatic. I have registered for the Close Contact Exemption Scheme and my registration number is _____.

The processes we are using to try and stop the transmission of COVID-19 are:

- good infection control processes
- keeping records for contact tracing purposes
- wearing PPE correctly including approved masks.

Signed: _____

Employer Name (Printed): _____

Other information about your employees' roles and responsibilities

During **Phases Two and Three** of the Omicron response, workers at registered critical services who are vaccinated and have no COVID-19 symptoms and have been identified as a close contact of a COVID-19 case will be able to continue to work, as long as they return a negative Rapid Antigen Test before each day/shift they are at work (during the isolation period) and follow specific health protocols.

They will only be allowed to go to work – not anywhere else.

What should your support employee do once they are notified that they are a close contact?

1. When a worker at a critical service is notified that they are a close contact of a COVID-19 case, they will need to contact you to let you know.
2. For the worker to access Rapid Antigen Tests, you must send the worker two documents:
 - A copy of the email you received from the Critical Services Register which contains your unique identifier
 - A critical worker authorisation letter (example above), which must include:
 - a declaration that the business and worker are critical, with a rationale (businesses may include the output of the self-assessment tool)
 - an outline of the protocols the worker will need to follow to mitigate transmission risks
 - the business's unique identifier from the Critical Services Register email
3. The worker will then need to complete an Order Form for Rapid Antigen Tests through this link [Home \(force.com\)](#)

Locations of RAT Pick up sites can be found on this link: [COVID-19 Testing • Healthpoint](#). More locations will be added on 24 February 2022.

Test Results

If the worker gets a **negative test result** and do not have symptoms, they can come into work.

However, If they get a **positive test result**, they must self-isolate immediately and get a PCR test and won't be able to come to support you.

If a result is **failed or indeterminate**, they must take the test again. Workers must re-test if it was their first record of the day or isolate and get a PCR test if it was not.

The worker must report their results to you.

More guidance can be found here: [Rapid antigen testing – Ministry of Health](#)