

Using antigen tests for COVID-19 screening in K-12 schools

Remember: A permanent record must be kept of every test performed, including the test result, the time the sample was taken, the date, the full name of person being tested, their date of birth, their contact information, and the name of the person performing the test. Every test result must be reported to the State of Alaska. Any positive test must be reported to the State of Alaska immediately by either leaving a message on the COVID Reporting Hotline (1-877-469-8067) or electronically. In addition, all positive or negative test results must be reported electronically to the State of Alaska as soon as possible, ideally the day the test is performed. Please email Megan Tompkins (megan.tompkins@alaska.gov) to set up electronic reporting before performing any testing.

Regular screening of school staff is recommended by the CDC. Screening means testing staff who have no symptoms and no known exposure to COVID-19 (i.e. do not meet criteria to quarantine currently because of close contact with a person with COVID-19).

The CDC recommends regular screening tests for school staff based on the level of viral transmission in the community. DHSS recommends the following:

| High community transmission | Moderate community transmission | Low community transmission |
|--|---|---|
| >10 cases/100,000 people averaged over 14 days | 5-10 cases/100,000 people averaged over 14 days | <5 cases/100,000 people averaged over 14 days |
| Test staff twice per week | Test staff once per week | Test staff once every two weeks |

Schools may wish to decrease the frequency of testing starting two weeks after a staff member receives the second dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.

Schools may also choose to regularly screen high-risk groups within their schools, such as student athletes and coaches who regularly travel for sports competitions. Antigen tests may be used for this purpose. The frequency of antigen tests can be discussed with DHSS, but in general testing more often will give more useful results than testing less often.

Antigen tests do not replace the requirement for a molecular test to satisfy the AK Travel Health Orders, but a molecular test can replace an antigen test for screening.

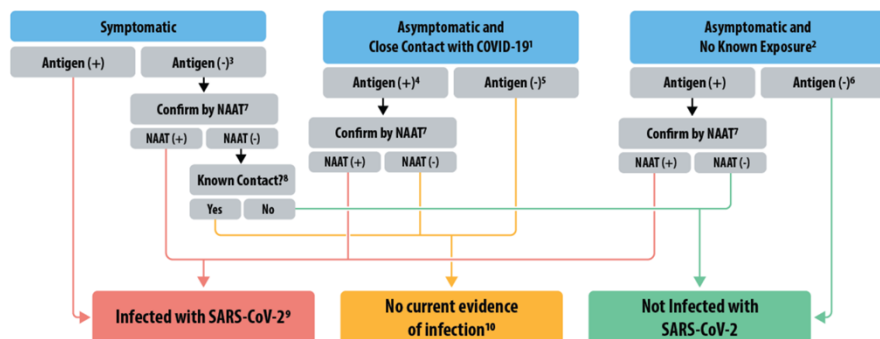
Commented [OEL(1): Include this? Is this a valid recommendation?

Staff and students who have recovered from COVID-19 and have a documented positive PCR test within the last 90 days should NOT be tested as part of a screening program. Instead, they should be considered negative unless they develop new symptoms. If they develop symptoms, they need to isolate themselves and contact their doctor to determine whether they need a test.

To conduct a screening antigen test:

1. Confirm that the person has **no symptoms** and is **not on quarantine**
2. Confirm that the person has **not tested positive for COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2) in the last 90 days**
3. If the person is under age 18, obtain verbal or written parent or guardian consent and verbal assent from the person; if an adult, obtain verbal or written consent from the person.
4. Perform an antigen test
5. If the test is **positive**, the person needs to get a molecular test and **must isolate** until they have the results from the molecular test. The molecular test will be the final answer for whether they have COVID-19 or not.
6. If the test is **negative**, the person is considered negative.

Figure 1. Antigen Test Algorithm

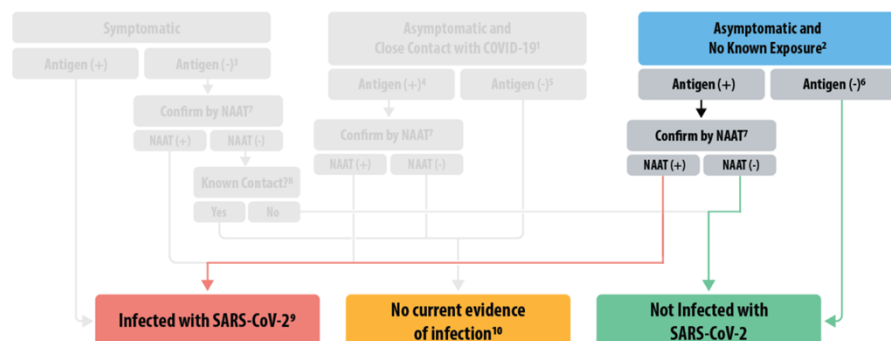


From <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/lab/resources/antigen-tests-guidelines.html>

Note: NAAT means a molecular test. For antigen screening tests, CDC recommends confirming **positive** tests only with a molecular test. Negative results are treated as negatives.

The part of the antigen test algorithm that is relevant to **screening testing** is as follows:

Figure 4. Antigen Testing Algorithm – Low Pretest Probability



More information on the BinaxNOW test:

The BinaxNOW test is an antigen test. To do a BinaxNOW antigen test, a chemical is placed onto the card, a nose swab is taken (not a deep nose swab) and then the swab is placed in a small card, twirled and left in place for 15 minutes. The card performs the test and displays the result in 15 minutes. The result is displayed as either one line or two, similar to a pregnancy test. This means that the test can be easily used in schools or other places that do not have specialized lab equipment.

This antigen test has the same limitations as the other antigen tests described in these guidelines. It is not as accurate as a PCR test. If someone has one or more symptom of COVID-19, a negative BinaxNOW test, like other antigen tests, is **not enough to be able to tell that they do not have COVID-19 and they will need a PCR/molecular test before they can return to school** without completing a 10 day isolation period. If someone has symptoms of COVID-19, we can consider a positive result from an antigen test positive and start contact tracing and quarantining close contacts.

The US Department of Health and Human Services has provided a number of tests to the State of Alaska for use in many settings including schools, and can be requested through your local Emergency Operations Committee. Although the State of Alaska has a finite number of tests available, schools are encouraged to request as many as they think they will need. Federal COVID-19 relief funding allocated to schools may also be used to purchase testing supplies.

The test also integrates with a phone app called NAVICA, which can securely store and display a test result. For more information, see the company webpages at : <https://www.abbott.com/BinaxNOW-Test-NAVICA-App.html> and <https://www.globalpointofcare.abbott/en/product-details/navica-binaxnow-covid-19-us.html> as well as the EUA at: <https://www.fda.gov/media/141570/download>

If you receive these tests, make sure to read all directions and perform the necessary control tests. If you have questions about how to perform tests, how to use or interpret these tests, or whether you have the right certification to do these tests, contact aksmartstart2020@alaska.gov.

Definitions:

Diagnostic test: A test performed in a person who has one or more symptoms of COVID-19 or has been exposed to COVID-19 in the last 14 days

Screening test: A test performed in someone who has no symptoms whatsoever and has not been in close contact with anyone with COVID-19 in the last 14 days

Isolation: Staying home, away from other people, after developing symptoms and/or being diagnosed with COVID-19. A typical isolation period is ten days from the first symptom. A person can come off isolation once it has been ten days since their first symptom, their fever has been gone for 24 hours and their other symptoms are resolving. If they never have any symptoms, it is ten days from their positive test. If they test positive and later develop symptoms, it is ten days from their first symptom, regardless of how far into their isolation period they developed the first symptom.

Quarantine: Staying home, away from other people, after being exposed to (having close contact with) someone with COVID-19. A quarantine period is 14 days after the last contact with a person with COVID-19. If you live with that person, the quarantine period is their isolation period PLUS 14 days after they finish their isolation period. Currently, Alaskans may quarantine for 10 days after an exposure and then return to school on day 11 without a test as long as they continue to watch for symptoms and are very careful about masking, distancing, etc for the full 14 days. Alaskans may also return to school after 7 days (on day 8) after a negative test within 48 hours of returning to school, again as long as they continue to watch for symptoms and are very careful about masking, distancing, etc for the full 14 days.

Symptoms: Any one or more new symptoms from the following list, **even if it is very mild**, is considered possible COVID-19. Anyone with one or more new symptoms should isolate themselves and get tested as soon as possible. Symptom list: Fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, or diarrhea.

PCR test: A test that looks for fragments of virus genetic material from a nose swab or saliva/mouth swab. One brand name is Cepheid. Some PCR tests are rapid tests. All PCR tests are molecular tests.

Molecular test: A test that looks for fragments of virus genetic material from a nose swab or saliva/mouth swab. PCR tests are molecular tests. Some molecular tests are rapid tests. One rapid test brand name is Abbot ID NOW, which is now commercially available but supplies are extremely limited and may not be available in the next few months (for more information, see their website at www.globalpointofcare.abbott/en/product-details/id-now-covid-19.html).

Antigen test: A test that looks for fragments of the outside of the virus from a nose swab or saliva/mouth swab. One brand name is Sofia. Most antigen tests are rapid tests, but some rapid tests are not antigen tests.

Antibody tests: A blood test that looks for a past reaction to the virus. Antibody tests cannot be used to diagnose or exclude COVID-19 so will not be used in this testing guidance.

Close contact: Someone who has been within 6 feet for 15 minutes of someone else with COVID-19, or has had other notable exposure such as having been coughed on. The 15 minutes is cumulative, so even short times spent near someone can count if it happens often.

CLIA certification: A certificate that allows someone to perform a test. The certification costs \$180 currently for a multi-site certificate that lasts for two years, which a district may use for covering up to 200 schools. The certificate can be obtained by submitting Form CMS-116. Forms and more information can be obtained here: [https://www.cms.gov/Regulations-and-Guidance/Legislation/CLIA/How to Apply for a CLIA Certificate International Laboratories](https://www.cms.gov/Regulations-and-Guidance/Legislation/CLIA/How_to_Apply_for_a_CLIA_Certificate_International_Laboratories)