

# Interim SARS-CoV-2 Self-Testing Guidance for K-12 Schools and Child Care Providers

## Summary of April 27, 2022 Changes

- Clarification on reporting processes for self-tests in the [Reporting](#) section.

## Introduction

Testing is an essential element of a layered approach to prevent the spread of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. Testing may be useful in various ways in K-12 schools and child care or other youth-serving settings, including:

- Determining whether a student, child, or staff with symptoms has COVID-19.
- Testing students, children, teachers and staff without symptoms who have a documented exposure so they can remain in school or child care.
- Routine screening of students, children, teachers and staff, especially those who are at increased risk for exposure to SARS-CoV-2 virus because of their participation in high-risk activities or settings (e.g., athletics, performing arts, working with students/children who are unable to wear well-fitting masks, other high-aerosolizing activities, or those who work in areas with poor ventilation).

This guidance is intended to assist K-12 schools and child care providers in understanding **uses for COVID-19 self-tests** and develop **policies about self-tests**. Schools and child care providers can develop their own policies around using self-tests and can also consult with their local health jurisdiction (LHJ) when developing these plans or policies.

Self-tests are increasingly available and can make testing more accessible. Sometimes a self-test is also called a “home test,” an “at-home test,” or an “over-the-counter test.” These self-tests are usually available without a prescription in a pharmacy or retail store, and many are now [covered by public or private insurance](#).

Self-tests are:

- Easy to use
- Quick to return results (in about 15 minutes)
- Low- or no-cost
- Can be used regardless of vaccination status
- Can be used regardless of whether COVID-19 symptoms are present

Note that each individual test is approved for specific ages. Parents may be required to supervise or collect the sample for children below certain ages, and the authorized age-range

varies based on the test. Schools and child care providers should thoroughly review and understand the individual self-test instructions provided with each test. See FDA's list of [In Vitro Diagnostics Emergency Use Authorizations](#) for more information about the age requirements of specific authorized tests.

## More Information on Self-tests

- Most self-tests are antigen tests and are intended to detect current infection.
- They can be used to help determine if an individual's symptoms are caused by COVID-19. They can also be used for individuals who do not have any symptoms.
- These tests detect a protein on the surface of the SARS CoV-2 virus and most have been found to maintain this ability with different variants.
- It is important to follow the package instructions exactly when performing the test, including repeating the test if specified.
- A positive self-test result means the test detected the virus, and it is likely the individual is currently infected and contagious to others. The individual should follow [current CDC isolation guidance](#) to decrease the risk of infecting others.
- A negative self-test result means the virus was not detected. However, antigen tests are not as sensitive as laboratory-based tests (such as RT-PCR tests) and therefore may not detect all infections, especially early in the infection. A repeat antigen test or a molecular test (such as RT-PCR) may be recommended for individuals who are symptomatic. Consult [CDC guidance on antigen testing](#), a healthcare provider, or your local health jurisdiction for more information.
- See FDA's list of [In Vitro Diagnostics Emergency Use Authorizations](#) for more information about the performance of specific authorized tests.
- Different testing recommendations may apply in an outbreak; please consult with your local health jurisdiction.
- Occasionally, rapid antigen tests can produce a false positive or false negative test result, depending on the accuracy of the test kit. Please carefully review the test kit instructions for use, and in cases where there is a question of the result validity, either repeat the test or seek a molecular test PCR test.

## How K-12 Schools and Child Care Providers Can Use Self-tests

Schools and child care providers may use and/or provide COVID-19 self-tests in a [variety of ways](#), depending on whether the facility has a Medical Test Site/[CLIA license](#).

### What is a Medical Test Site/CLIA License?

All facilities in Washington state that perform laboratory testing on human specimens for health assessment or the diagnosis, prevention or treatment of disease are regulated under state law, and are required to obtain a Medical Test Site/[CLIA license in Washington](#).

Washington is an exempt state, meaning medical test sites in Washington are exempt from CLIA licensure but must follow Washington Medical Test Site regulations that require Medical Test Site licensing. A CLIA number is assigned to facilities, but a Medical Test Site license is required to run testing in Washington instead of a CLIA Certificate. To determine if you need a Medical Test Site/CLIA license in Washington for your facility's intended use of self-tests, see the sections below on the details for operating [with](#) or [without](#) the license.

## Self-Test Use [Without](#) a Medical Test Site License

A Medical Test Site/CLIA license (or simply, what would be a CLIA certificate of waiver in non-exempt states) is **not** needed for SARS-CoV-2 self-tests performed and interpreted by the individual, parent, or guardian themselves.

A school or child care without a Waived Medical Test Site/CLIA license may *provide* self-tests (approved for individual over-the-counter use) to individuals, parents, or guardians if the self-testing is performed and interpreted by the individual, parent, or guardian. These can be performed at home, or at the school or child care. The following can be done by the school or child care without the need for a Medical Test Site/CLIA license:

- Hand the test kit (approved by FDA for over-the-counter use) to the individual, parent, or guardian along with the test manufacturer's instructions for use.
- Ask the individual, parent, or guardian to carefully read and follow the package insert to ensure the instructions are followed exactly.
- Allow the individual, parent, or guardian to follow the instructions to collect the sample (individual swabs themselves, or have the parent or guardian perform the test on their child), and then run the test. Encouraging the use of a timing device to ensure the test is read at the appropriate time is highly recommended.
- Allow the individual, parent, or guardian to interpret or read the results.

After the results have been read and/or interpreted, the school or child care representative may then verify the results if they desire. They can ask to view the result if the test was performed on site or request a photograph of the completed test. See below for additional tips on verifying results.

If the school or child care site observes an individual, parent, or guardian make an error in performing the self-test by not following the package insert instructions, a new self-test kit may be provided, and the individual, parent, or guardian may be advised to follow the manufacturer instructions more closely. The school or child care site may also provide the individual, parent, or guardian with a copy of the [WA DOH guidance for use of self-tests](#).

Without a Waived Medical Test Site/CLIA license in Washington, the school or child care **may not** perform the test or interpret the test and provide the result to the individual, parent, or guardian. Additionally, the school or childcare **may not** provide guidance to the individual about

administering and performing the test (swab/sample collection and applying the patient sample to a test device), interpretation of the test (reading the results from the testing device) or provide individual advice on how to respond to the test results.

If an individual tests positive, the school or child care site should encourage the individual, parent, or guardian follow the [WA DOH guidance for use of self-tests](#), which includes next steps after testing positive and options to report the result, and also to report the positive result to a primary care provider. Individuals with a positive test result should be excluded from child care, school, or work until the isolation period is completed, and follow [current isolation guidance](#).

## Self-Test Use With a Waived Medical Test Site/CLIA License

A Medical Test Site/CLIA license would be required if the school or child care wishes to perform the testing instead of having the individual, parent, or guardian administer the test and interpret or provide the results. The school or child care can apply for a Medical Test Site/CLIA license on the [WA DOH Laboratory Quality Assurance page](#).

A school or child care with multiple buildings or locations may apply for a multiple-site CLIA license if they are a Not-for-Profit or State/Government agency (multiple-site CLIA licenses are limited to performing 15 waived medical test types, which will not be an issue for schools or child care sites only offering SARS-CoV-2/COVID-19 testing). For-profit child care sites need to apply for a separate license for each site. If a school or child care site is conducting mobile testing, for example using a vehicle to conduct testing at temporary and/or multiple sites, the mobile testing operation may be covered under the certificate of the designated primary site or home base, using its address. Mobile test sites should provide WA DOH Laboratory Quality Assurance (via the [LQA@doh.wa.gov](mailto:LQA@doh.wa.gov) email inbox) with VIN numbers for each vehicle used for mobile testing.

Schools and child care should have the student, parent, or guardian follow the [WA DOH guidance for use of self-tests](#) and [guidance on next steps after testing positive](#).

## Reporting

If the school or child care site has a Medical Test Site/CLIA license and performs the testing, the school or child care site must report test results to the Washington State Department of Health. More information about reporting can be found on the [Reporting COVID-19 Test Results for Point-of-Care Testing Facilities page](#).

Schools and child care facilities are required to report all COVID-19 cases, suspected cases, and suspected outbreaks that may be associated with the school or child care directly to local public health in accordance with [WAC 246-101](#) parts [-415](#) and [-420](#). For example, if schools and/or child care are made aware of self-tests conducted by the individual or the parent/guardian, and the positive result is shared with the school or child care, then these positive test results are considered suspect cases and must be reported to LHJs.

Please see the table below for information on how tests should be reported based on test distribution/administration method.

Test Distribution/ Administration Method	How to Report	What to Report
School or child care facility administers the self-test	<a href="#">Reporting COVID-19 Test Results for Point-of-Care Testing Facilities</a>	Required information as specified by appropriate reporting method <i>(see link in How to Report column to the left)</i>
School or child care facility does <b>NOT</b> administer the self-test but is made aware of a positive result	Use methods of reporting notifiable conditions to <a href="#">LHJs</a> as specified by the LHJ	Suspected cases and outbreaks shared to the school and/or child care

A list of local public health jurisdictions and their contact information can be found [here](#).

### Consider Developing a Policy Regarding the Use of Self-tests

Schools and child care sites should implement policies outlining if they will accept results from self-tests for return to school, child care or other purposes; and if so, whether they will require any verification of the result. As noted above, without a Medical Test Site/CLIA license, schools and child care facilities can still request to see the completed test to verify the result or request a photograph of the result. Potential additional steps to verify the result are listed below:

- Have individuals, parents or guardians write the date and the name of the tested individual on the test and submit a photograph of the card with the result.
- Create an attestation form and require signature declaring the test specimen was obtained from the individual represented on the form, that the test was performed on the date written on the test, and that the test was processed according to the instructions provided.
- Some tests allow individuals to complete a proctored test or report their results through a phone or web application.
- If the test does not provide corresponding electronic reporting, positive test results should be shared with the individual’s healthcare provider in order to receive appropriate medical care.

### More COVID-19 Information and Resources

Stay up-to-date on the [current COVID-19 situation in Washington](#), [Governor Inslee’s proclamations](#), [symptoms](#), [how it spreads](#), and [how and when people should get tested](#). See our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) for more information.

A person's race/ethnicity or nationality does not, itself, put them at greater risk of COVID-19. However, data are revealing that communities of color are being disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. This is due to the effects of racism, and in particular, structural racism, that leaves some groups with fewer opportunities to protect themselves and their communities. [Stigma will not help to fight the illness](#). Share only accurate information to keep rumors and misinformation from spreading.

- [WA State Department of Health 2019 Novel Coronavirus Outbreak \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [WA State Coronavirus Response \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Find Your Local Health Jurisdiction](#)
- [CDC Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Stigma Reduction Resources](#)

**Have more questions?** Call our COVID-19 Information hotline: **1-800-525-0127**

Monday – 6 a.m. to 10 p.m., Tuesday – Sunday and [observed state holidays](#), 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. For interpretative services, **press #** when they answer and **say your language**. For questions about your own health, COVID-19 testing, or testing results, please contact a health care provider.

To request this document in another format, call 1-800-525-0127. Deaf or hard of hearing customers, please call 711 ([Washington Relay](#)) or email [civil.rights@doh.wa.gov](mailto:civil.rights@doh.wa.gov).