Dept. of Health Services: Stay healthy this fall: COVID-19 at-home tests and booster shots still available with no out-of-pocket cost

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The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) and Office of the Commissioner of Insurance (OCI) are reminding Wisconsinites that their COVID-19 at-home tests and booster shots are still available with no out-of-pocket cost.

Doses of the updated COVID-19 boosters are in Wisconsin and will continue to be delivered to providers over the next several weeks. Pharmacies, health centers, and clinics are continuing to make appointments available as their booster doses arrive. People are encouraged to check with their primary care provider, local or Tribal health department or clinics, or visit vaccines.gov(link is external) to find vaccination sites near them. Health plans are also required to cover the cost of COVID-19 vaccines, including boosters, through the end of the federally declared public health emergency.

"As we head into cold and flu season, we encourage everyone to protect themselves and their families from COVID-19 by staying up-to-date on vaccinations," said DHS Secretary-designee Karen Timberlake. "At-home testing can also help identify a case of COVID-19 early, and there are resources available to help you stock up on those tests."

DHS has an online program for each Wisconsin household to get free at-home rapid COVID-19 tests delivered directly to them. Wisconsin residents can go to the Say Yes! COVID Test(link is external) website and place an order for a package of five rapid antigen COVID-19 tests at no cost.

All health plans are also required to cover the cost of over the counter, at-home rapid COVID-19 tests for their members. This requirement applies to both private health insurance companies and group health plans, like those provided by an employer.

Under these new guidelines, COVID-19 tests may either be covered by the insurer with no upfront cost or reimbursed by the insurer. If your health plan sets up a network of pharmacies to provide the tests, coverage is provided upfront and there is no need to request reimbursement.

"Check with your health insurance company to learn how they are covering at-home COVID-19 tests," said Insurance Commissioner Nathan Houdek. "If you buy an at-home test outside your insurance company's pharmacy network, keep the receipt and your insurer should reimburse the cost in part or in full."

If you think any package of COVID-19 tests you have at home may be expired, check before you throw it out. The FDA has extended the expiration dates for many of the COVID-19 self-tests that are widely available at stores and pharmacies, including tests by iHealth which were commonly shipped by the federal government's program and are now shipping out through the Wisconsin Say Yes! COVID Test program.

To check if a package of COVID-19 tests has an extended expiration date, people can [find more information on all the FDA-authorized brands(link is external)](), as well as specific information on iHealth brand tests that includes a [tool to search your package's expiration(link is external)]().

Many of these COVID-19 tests were initially authorized with expiration dates that have been extended as the manufacturers study data to ensure the tests are still accurate.

For free, confidential support placing an order for your household's test package or finding health care and community resources near you, dial 211. For information, resources, and data related to COVID-19 and the vaccination program in Wisconsin, visit the DHS [COVID-19 webpage](). You can also follow @DHSWI on [Facebook(link is external)](), [Twitter(link is external)](), or dhs.wi on [Instagram(link is external)]() for more information on COVID-19.