

Public Health Madison and Dane County : Testing strategy shift: “antigen first” means rapid results

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Effective October 1, Public Health Madison & Dane County will transition to a new strategy for COVID-19 testing at its South Madison clinic.

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) announced a new directive for [Community Testing Support Program](#)(CTSP) partners to shift away from lab-based PCR testing to an antigen test model, in an effort to provide rapid results.

According to DHS, the purpose of this change is to “ensure testing availability at state-supported CTSP sites in the event of a COVID-19 surge and to meet community need.”

“You can still access no cost COVID tests at our clinic, but if you’re not having symptoms, you’ll receive only a free rapid test. If you do have symptoms, expect to get two swabs during the appointment. Then, if the rapid test comes back negative, we’ll send the confirmatory PCR swab into the lab to be tested,” said Colton Ritchie, COVID testing director.

Currently, [rapid tests are approved](#) for everyone ages 2 and older. PCR tests are approved for everyone over the age of 1. In order to provide testing for those in this age range, the new testing format will allow continued PCR testing with or without symptoms.

[At-home rapid tests](#) are also available to buy in stores, pharmacies, and online. [Insurance companies](#), [Medicaid](#) (BadgerCare), and [Medicare](#) are required to reimburse up to eight tests per month, per member. Remember to [report your](#)

[positive test result](#) to help Public Health better understand the level of COVID in our community.

People who live in Wisconsin can also go to the [Say Yes! COVID Test website](#) and place an order for a package of five rapid antigen COVID-19 tests at no cost.

To schedule an appointment, visit www.publichealthmdc.com/testing. You can also follow @publichealthmdc on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#) for updates on COVID-19.