

Media Release

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FREE RAPID ANTIGEN TESTS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

The Victorian Government is bringing kindergartens and long daycare centres in line with school settings, providing free rapid antigen test kits to help manage coronavirus outbreaks and limit disruption to children's learning.

From today, all eligible kindergarten and long daycare services can opt-in to the program to receive at-home rapid antigen test kits for children who have been identified as primary close contacts – reducing both quarantine time and pressure on families, while ensuring early childhood settings are as low-risk as possible.

Test kits will be available to early childhood services subject to outbreaks from today and will be distributed to eligible services by the end of this week, ready to be used from Monday, 22 November.

The rapid antigen tests will be provided for free to kindergarten and long daycare services who have a system to collect, record and hold the testing information and parents and carers will opt-in for their children to be part of the scheme.

Once tests have been delivered to services, children can return to their early childhood service after seven days of quarantine if they get a negative standard PCR test on day six at their local testing site, and then return a negative rapid antigen test result each day they attend their early childhood service from days eight to 14.

The quick and easy tests indicate a result for coronavirus within 15-30 minutes, with families required to report the test results to the early childhood service each morning prior to attending – supporting children to return to early learning as quickly as possible.

The Therapeutic Goods Administration has approved rapid antigen testing for home use from Monday, 1 November. The tests indicate whether a person is likely to have coronavirus, but a standard PCR test is still needed to confirm a positive infection.

In addition to the rapid antigen testing program for early childhood settings, the Victorian Government has also implemented staff vaccination requirements, grants for improved ventilation and improved cleaning and contact tracing regimes to get the state's youngest learners back to their learning quickly as possible.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Early Childhood Ingrid Stitt

"We want to help our young children get back to face-to-face learning with their teachers and educators as quickly and safely as possible."

"These rapid antigen tests will help limit disruption for our children and their families while supporting our early childhood services."