

Media Release

The Hon James Merlino MP
Deputy Premier
Minister for Education
Minister for Mental Health



Tuesday, 5 April 2022

SUPPORTING FAMILIES WITH FREE RATS AT SCHOOL

The Victorian Government will continue to provide free rapid test kits to families through schools and early childhood settings for the start of term 2, with further deliveries rolling out this week.

While Victoria's surveillance testing system remains voluntary, we want parents to be confident sending their kids to school, kinder and childcare – and we know testing can help.

To support families who choose to undertake voluntary surveillance testing, 16 million RATs will be distributed from this week for students, staff and children across the education system to use for at least the first four weeks of Term 2.

Assuming a 50 per cent compliance rate with screening of students, Department of Health modelling estimates voluntary surveillance testing has prevented 113,500 COVID infections throughout Term 1.

Testing recommendations will remain the same, with all primary and secondary school students and staff, and early childhood education and care staff and children, encouraged to test at home twice a week.

Those at special schools are encouraged to test five days each week due to the higher risk for medically vulnerable children.

Alongside voluntary rapid antigen tests identifying cases as early as possible before they enter the classroom, the Government is also continuing its strong ventilation measures – with a further 60,000 air purifiers currently on their way to schools to add to the 51,000 already delivered.

Vaccination remains the best way to protect students and staff – and children aged 5 to 11 are strongly encouraged to get their first and second doses, and staff and students aged 16 to 17 should get their third dose.

The measures are an important step to ensure that schools and early childhood centres remain as safe as possible for staff and students in Term 2 and throughout the winter months.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Education James Merlino

"We know surveillance testing has prevented tens of thousands of kids getting sick and having their schools shut – and we thank the many Victorian families who have opted into voluntary testing."

"We'll keep supporting Victorian families with the cost of living, with free rapid test kits available through schools and early childhood settings for the start of Term 2."

Quote attributable to Minister for Early Childhood Ingrid Stitt

"Early childhood services are critical in our kids' early development – we'll continue to support them with strong COVIDSafe measures to keep children and staff as safe as possible."