At-Home, Rapid COVID-19 Tests

The City and Borough Fire Departments of Ketchikan are distributing at-home, rapid antigen tests to community members.

Where can I pick up a free at-home test and how can I get?

As of December, 13th your fire department is distributing free at-home tests to the public from the following locations:

- City Fire Station 1 (70 Bawden St) and Station 2 (3352 Tongass Ave)
- South Tongass Volunteer Fire Department Station 4 (5690 Roosevelt Dr)
- North Tongass Volunteer Fire Department Station 8 (13110 North Tongass Hwy)

At this time, the public can pick up two tests per family while supplies lasts. The goal of the distribution is for families to have at-home tests on reserve for when one might be needed; for instance, if you're experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19 or if you have recently been in close contact with someone who tested positive. Do not go into one of these facilities to pick up at-home tests if you're feeling sick.

What is an at-home, rapid antigen test? And when should I use one?

An at-home COVID-19 test is a convenient option for anyone who needs to get tested for COVID-19. The test can be self-administered at home or anywhere, returns results in 15 minutes, and is a useful tool to help stop the spread of COVID-19.

If you're feeling sick, even with mild symptoms, or have been exposed to someone who tested positive for COVID-19, you can take an at-home test to find out if you have COVID-19. Even if you don't have symptoms and have not been exposed to an individual with COVID-19, using a self-test before gathering indoors with others can give you information about the risk of spreading the virus that causes COVID-19. This is especially important before gathering with unvaccinated children, older individuals, those who are immunocompromised, or individuals at risk of severe disease.

These at-home, rapid tests are antigen tests, which – while not as sensitive as PCR tests – are effective at detecting COVID-19 when it becomes transmissible.

Here's more information and guidance on self-testing from the CDC, the Alaska Department of Health & Social Services, and Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District.

How do I use this test?

Currently, your fire department is distributing the QuickVue At-Home OTC COVID-19 Test. Printed instructions are included in every test box, or watch a short instructional video on how to use this particular test here.

Most test kits come in a pack that contains two tests:

- If the first test is negative, you should retest 36–72 hours after your first test.
- If either one of the test results is positive, you are considered positive for SARS-CoV-2 infection.
    - If the first test is positive, you do not need to do the second test as a subsequent negative test does not overrule the first positive test.

Two negative test results should be interpreted with caution in symptomatic individuals. Consider getting tested at the COVID-19 Drive-up testing facility, your healthcare provider, or another provider, especially if you have common COVID-19 symptoms, or if you have been exposed to someone who tested positive for COVID-19 within the past 14 days.

If I test Positive, what should I do?

If you test positive:

- Please isolate yourself from others for 10 days (regardless of vaccination status or lack of symptoms). This means you should stay in a specific room away from other people and pets. If possible, you should use a separate bathroom. Don't share personal household items, like cups, towels, and utensils. You should not go to work, school, church, or gatherings.
- Please notify your close contacts that they should quarantine. A close contact is anyone – either 48 hours before symptom onset or 48 hours before testing positive – you've been within six feet of for 15 or more cumulative minutes over a 24 hour period.
    - Fully vaccinated contacts:
        - Do not need to quarantine unless they become symptomatic
        - Should get a test 5-7 days after exposure regardless of lack of symptoms
        - Should wear a mask around others for 14 days or until their test is negative
        - Should test immediately if symptoms develop
    - Partially or unvaccinated contacts:
        - Need to quarantine for one of the below options:
            - 10 days from last exposure (no test required unless they have symptoms), or
            - Quarantine for 7 days, if they get a test on Day 5-7 and that test is negative

        - Should test immediately if symptoms develop

- Share your positive test results with your healthcare provider or call the COVID hotline at 907-531-3329 to learn about possible treatment options or any other appropriate medical follow-up you might need.
- Monitor yourself for symptoms. If your symptoms become worrisome, contact your healthcare provider. If you experience any emergency symptoms such as difficulty breathing, chest pain, or confusion, call 911.
- While positive results are not counted in Alaska Department of Health & Social Services (DHSS) COVID-19 numbers per guidance, your fire department asks residents to report positive at-home test results to learn about possible treatment options or any other appropriate medical follow-up that might be needed. Public Health can offer guidance on isolation and contact tracing but is not officially performing contact tracing on self-test results.

If you have questions about how to isolate or how to notify your contacts, call the COVID hotline at 907-531-3329.

Does my positive test result get counted in official COVID-19 numbers?

No. While positive results are not counted in Alaska Department of Health & Social Services (DHSS) COVID-19 numbers per guidance, your fire department asks Ketchikan residents to report positive at-home test results to learn about possible treatment options or any other appropriate medical follow-up that might be needed.

Since these positive test results don't get counted in Alaska Department of Health & Social Services (DHSS) numbers, they do not get counted in City and Borough of Ketchikan COVID-19 either since Public Health gets its COVID data from DHSS.

If I test negative but am feeling sick, what should I do?

Most test kits come in a pack that contains two tests. If the first test is negative, you should use the second test 36 hours later. If both tests are negative but you have continuing or worsening symptoms that are consistent with common COVID-19 symptoms, you should get a PCR test through the COVID-19 Drive-up testing facility, your healthcare provider, or another provider.

I've recently traveled. Can I use an at-home test to see if I caught COVID-19 while away or traveling?

In light of the new COVID-19 variant, Omicron, if you've recently traveled, please take the free COVID-19 PCR test that's offered at the Ketchikan International Airport upon arrival. Similarly, if you've recently traveled and test positive on an at-home antigen test, please take a follow-up PCR test at a local health provider or the drive-up testing site. Positive PCR test results from the airport or other facilities are sent to the State Public Health Lab for potential sequencing.