

Baker Administration Secures Contract for 26 Million Rapid Antigen Tests

Today the Baker-Polito Administration announced an order was placed with iHealth to supply the state with 26 million rapid antigen tests over the next 3 months. The tests will be prioritized to support K-12 schools and childcare settings. The agreement allows for shipments of tests to arrive on a rolling basis in the Commonwealth, but the Administration warns that the timing and shipment amounts will vary depending on international shipping and production variables.

The Baker-Polito Administration also released a public health advisory this week to advise all residents on when to seek tests for COVID-19. The advisory advises all residents to seek COVID-19 tests when exhibiting COVID symptoms, or five days following a known close contact with someone diagnosed with COVID pursuant to MA DPH quarantine and isolation protocols, updated as of December 29 in accordance with the new CDC guidance.

The new isolation protocols do not require a COVID-19 test to exit isolation after having COVID. This general rule also applies to childcare and K-12. Additional information on testing protocols for specific situations in childcare can be found [here](#) and for K-12 can be found [here](#).

The new quarantine protocols recommend, but do not require, all exposed individuals get a test five days after exposure. Exposed individuals do not need to quarantine in the following circumstances:

- If fully vaccinated and not yet eligible to receive a booster OR
- If fully vaccinated and have received their booster OR

-0 If they had COVID and it is less than 90 days since they were diagnosed. For more details visit [here](#).

DPH advises that a positive COVID-19 rapid antigen does not need to be confirmed with a PCR test.

DPH recommends individuals that have COVID symptoms and test negative with a rapid antigen test should isolate and either repeat an antigen test or get a PCR test in 24-48 hours if they continue to exhibit symptoms. Additionally, DPH does not advise employers, or schools and childcare, to require a test as a condition of returning to work or school.

View the public health advisory [here](#).

Vaccination and getting a booster remain the best possible protection against COVID. There are almost 1,000 locations in the Commonwealth for residents to receive a COVID-19 vaccine or booster. Visit [VaxFinder.mass.gov](https://vaxfinder.mass.gov) to book an appointment.

Massachusetts National Guard

Governor Baker also today activated 500 additional members of the Massachusetts National Guard to support the state's health care system. This order expands the National Guard activation of 500 members announced on December 21 to support non-clinical functions in the Commonwealth's hospitals. Prioritized uses for the newly activated 500 members will be to provide additional non-clinical staffing at community hospitals and high-volume emergency departments, public hospitals, skilled nursing facilities and dialysis centers. These guard personnel will be deployed beginning the week of January 17.