

Rapid Antigen Test (RAT)

While Queensland has passed its peak of Covid infections, WA has entered a new phase regarding the Covid-19 pandemic. The virus is circulating and currently over 1,000 new cases a day are reported in WA (about 3,500 in QLD). Thursday, 3 March 2022, the (international) borders in WA will re-open and unlimited travel will be allowed again. This will of course have a further impact on the number of Covid-19 cases in WA which will affect our operations as the likelihood of us having to isolate or quarantine ourselves will increase. Fortunately, everyone at Neighbourhood Care is (fully) vaccinated, and except for a few participants (eg. the immuno compromised), every participant is vaccinated too and therefore we are all well protected against the virus.

For the time being, the RATs will be playing a crucial role in our society, but especially in the way we provide care and support services to vulnerable people.

We are receiving an increasing number of questions how to deal with the RATs and who is paying for what and how the process works. If you google 'Rapid Antigen Test' you will unfortunately get several explanations that sometimes contradict each other or are otherwise not the most recent version. The Government is not particularly good at removing old versions. To resolve this, we are putting a mini website together, attached to our Neighbourhood Care website that will be live this week, where you can find the latest official information, made easily accessible.

With this communication I would like to address some of the current questions around the RATs.

For Participants

- Participants can use their core funding to purchase rapid antigen tests where it is required to access their reasonable and necessary supports.
- If you are a concession card holder (pension card, healthcare card), you are eligible to receive a limited number of free RATs at chemists and pharmacists. This is probably the easiest way for the participants to get the RATs in house quickly.
- If the participant wants to claim RATs via their core funding, the method of claiming depends on whether they are self-managed, plan-managed or NDIA-managed. If they are Self- or Plan managed, they can do it directly. If they are NDIA managed, they can acquire the tests via a NDIS registered chemist, pharmacist or organisations such as Surgical House (<https://surgicalhouse.com.au>).
- Be aware, that we as a provider cannot claim the costs of any RAT test with NDIS (for you or the participants), unless we are running a SIL (Supported Independent Living, 24x7). Even the ILO (Independent Living Option) is excluded from claiming arrangements.

For Team members

- Participants may also purchase rapid antigen tests for their support workers as needed to ensure they can safely receive supports. There is no maximum: the participant can purchase the amount they need to receive reasonable and necessary NDIS supports. In other words, if the support situation requires you to or the participant just wants you to do a RAT test, the participants should provide you this test from their own stock.
- If the participant has no RATs for themselves and/or you, and you go out to get the tests for them, try to avoid using your own money to buy the tests. Although Neighbourhood Care will reimburse you, be aware that we cannot claim it and therefore becomes a cost to the organisation, while the participants could have had the test for free or would have been able to claim it against their core budget, if properly handled (see also above 'For Participants'). Therefore, please only pay for the participant as a last resort.
- If you have Covid and need to isolate yourself for the currently required 7 days, you can only go back into the community and back to work, if you are symptoms free and can produce a negative RAT result. In QLD, you can do this already after 5 days, and if the RAT test is negative you can return to work. Neighbourhood Care will pay for one test in this post-infection situation.
- If you are in quarantine because of a close contact, household member, or other non-work-related circumstance, please use your own RATs. The WA Government provides now five free tests per person (<https://www.wa.gov.au/government/covid-19-coronavirus/covid-19-coronavirus-wa-free-rat-program>).

Should you have any further questions, please contact Evan, Brett or myself.

Take care and please stay safe!

Arnold.