

MEMORANDUM

To: Students and Staff at K-12 Schools

From: Dr. Janice Fitzgerald, Chief Medical Officer of Health

Subject: Changes to COVID-19 Rapid Antigen Self-Testing Program

Date: March 29, 2022

Based on emerging evidence regarding rapid antigen self-testing for COVID-19 (in the context of Omicron), we are recommending two changes to our existing protocols:

- 1. The swab collection site will change from a nasal swab to a throat, cheeks, and nasal swab.** Rapid antigen tests can more reliably detect infectious cases of the Omicron variant using combined oral-nasal samples as viral load peaks first in the throat and then in the nose. Please follow the instructions for the new throat, cheek and nasal swab collection technique [here](#). We have also updated your test instruction sheets to reflect this new method (enclosed).
- 2. Participation in this program is not required for individuals who have recently had a COVID-19 infection.** Current evidence suggests that reinfection is unlikely in the three months following an infection with Omicron. Therefore, individuals are not required to test or self-isolate for 90 days from symptom onset or the positive test date.

You are encouraged to share your rapid tests with others who require testing if you have extra kits available at home (for example, friends and family members).

Please do not waste rapid tests. These are a valuable and limited resource and should be used wisely and only when testing is indicated. If you are unsure of your testing requirements, please complete the online COVID-19 Assessment and Test Reporting tool at covidassessment.nlchi.nl.ca for direction.