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Export date: Sun Nov 1 1:51:01 2026 / +0000 GMT

Local health unit participating in rapid antigen testing

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Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph (WDG) Public Health is opting to participate in the province's new rapid antigen testing program in schools.

The Ontario government announced on Tuesday (Oct. 5) that the program will be made available for targeted testing of children in schools and registered child care settings. The program will see unvaccinated asymptomatic students in schools with COVID-19 cases take a voluntary rapid test to determine if they can remain in school.

Shortly after the government announced the new program, WDG Public Health published a press release announcing their participation in the program.

?I am pleased to see the Province add this layer of protection,? said Dr. Nicola Mercer, medical officer of health. ?This program adds another local tool to fight this pandemic in Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph. Locally, we will use the best available health data to ensure these tests are used as effectively as possible to protect children who are most at risk from COVID-19.?

Preliminary details on the program note that WDG Public Health will be using available health data to identify which schools and childcare centre will be most appropriate for the rapid testing.

Rapid test kits and education of their use will be provided to school and childcare setting through the school board, school administration and facility management.

The rapid tests will be used only for unvaccinated asymptomatic students and children who are not high-risk contacts with symptomatic and high-risk cases accesses lab-based PCR testing. Those who receive a positive test will require a lab-based PCR test while those with negative tests can continue in-person learning.

Parents with children at settings where the program is implemented will have the option to not participate in the program.

?COVID-19 can seriously impact a child's health and their social and school lives,? said Mercer. ?Testing gives us another way to protect individual children and those they live with, learn with and play with.?

For more information about the school program in WDG Public Health, go to www.wdgpublichealth.ca/safer-schools.