NEWS RELEASE

COVID-19 rapid tests for people 70+ to be available at pharmacies

VICTORIA – People aged 70 years and older will soon have access to rapid antigen tests through community pharmacies at no cost.

 "We started using rapid tests to protect those most vulnerable in our province, including those in long-term care, and now that we have at-home rapid tests available, we are expanding that strategy by making them available to all people 70 years and older," said Dr. Bonnie Henry, provincial health officer. "This will allow people to quickly test for COVID-19 when they have symptoms so they can keep themselves and their loved ones safe."

This week, the Ministry of Health, in collaboration with the BC Pharmacy Association, is shipping COVID-19 rapid tests to community pharmacies throughout the province. Starting as early as this Friday, Feb. 25, 2022, people aged 70 years and older can pick up one kit containing five tests every 28 days from participating pharmacies at no cost. Individuals must present their personal health number when picking up the kit or, if others are picking up kits on their behalf, in addition to the individual's name and personal health number, date of birth must also be supplied.

 "Community pharmacies have played an important role in supporting people in B.C. throughout the COVID-19 pandemic by providing vaccinations and now distributing rapid tests," said Adrian Dix, Minister of Health. "Our expanded test availability means more people will be able to access rapid tests to use to understand their own symptoms and illness and to take action to limit transmission to their friends, family and work."

Test kits are available to all individuals aged 70 years and older. People should pick up their kits when they are asymptomatic and use one test at a time when they have symptoms. Guidelines for testing continue to indicate tests should be used for symptomatic individuals.

"B.C.'s community pharmacies are a convenient location for eligible patients to pick up their free rapid antigen tests," said Jamie Wigston, president of the BC Pharmacy Association.

B.C. is expecting to receive an additional 12 million tests from the federal government within the next four weeks, which will support the province's strategy to further distribute tests to members of the broader community.

Quick Fact:

- As of Feb. 23, 2022, B.C. has distributed more than 14,843,000 rapid antigen tests across the province.

Learn More:

For more information on the government's distribution of rapid tests: https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/covid-19/info/testing

For information on how to access outpatient COVID-19 treatments: https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/covid-19/vaccine/treatments

For information on rapid antigen testing for COVID-19: http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/testing/rapid-antigen-testing

For information on when to get a COVID-19 test at a collection centre: http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/testing/when-to-get-a-covid-19-test

On understanding your test result: http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/testing/understanding-test-results

For instructions on what to do if you test positive: http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/Tested-positive-COVID19.pdf

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