



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FACTSHEET ON PILOTS FOR PRE-EVENT TESTING

Why are we doing pre-event testing?

To enable more economic and social activities, including large-scale events, to resume in a safe manner, the Ministry of Health (MOH) is piloting the use of pre-event testing as one of the measures to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 spread by reducing the risk of a COVID-19 positive case being present at an event. This complements the suite of safe management measures that have been put in place, including mask-wearing, safe distancing, group size and capacity limits, which remain core measures to reduce the risk of transmission.

Why are we using antigen rapid tests for pre-event testing?

2. Currently, we use Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) tests as the definitive test for the confirmation of COVID-19 cases. PCR tests remain the most accurate tests available today. However, the process from the point of swab to the release of results takes about one to two days, which is not feasible for pre-event testing. Given the need for shorter turnaround time, the pre-event testing will be using antigen rapid tests (ARTs), which can return fairly accurate results quickly, within half an hour.

3. The ARTs used in the pre-event testing pilots minimally meet the World Health Organization's (WHO's) recommendation of at least 80% for sensitivity and 97% for specificity and have been evaluated by MOH. This means that they will be able to pick up at least 80% of individuals who are infected with COVID-19, and will show a result of 3% false positives in healthy individuals.

What do the antigen rapid test results mean?

4. Whilst ARTs can yield results in a shorter timeframe, they have a lower accuracy rate compared to PCR tests. This means there is a risk that the ARTs may not detect some COVID-19 positive cases, or that some cases may test positive even though they are not infected with COVID-19. For the former, as there is still a possibility that a COVID-19 positive case could slip through to attend the event, there is still a need for the same safe management measures to be put in place, including mask-wearing, safe distancing, group size and capacity limits, to reduce the risk of transmission.

5. For the latter, all positive ART results will require a confirmatory PCR test to determine if the person is genuinely a positive case. As Singapore's current prevalence of COVID-19 is low, most of the ART positive cases would test negative under the more accurate PCR test (i.e. false positives), with only a small percentage that turn out to be truly COVID-19 positive.

Why are we doing pre-event testing pilots?

6. Pre-event testing pilots will enable MOH to study pre-event testing processes and to identify a model which can be implemented more widely and allow more large-scale events to resume eventually.

7. From mid-October to December 2020, the Government will be identifying selected events across different settings, such as business-to-business events, wedding receptions, live performances, and sports events to test different operational workflows for pre-event testing. These pilot events will be selected in consultation with various groups of event organisers based on the feasibility of accommodating various workflows to be tested.

What goes on during the pre-event testing pilots?

8. Participants going to an event or activity will be tested either at the event venue or at a separate testing facility. Only participants who are tested negative for ART or PCR negative will be allowed to participate in the event. The ARTs currently being piloted involves using a nasal swab to take a sample from the lower part of the nose, and should not be uncomfortable.

9. Participants will be informed by the event organiser on the specific requirements for each pilot event, as we will be trialling different processes for each pilot. For example, if the testing is being conducted at the event venue prior to admission, participants will likely have to arrive at the venue earlier to cater time for testing before attending the event. If the testing is conducted at a separate testing facility, participants will have to visit a separate testing facility beforehand and produce a valid certificate showing that the participant had tested negative for COVID-19 within a 24-hour timeframe from the end of the event, before being allowed to enter the event. As part of this pilot, the ARTs and confirmatory PCR tests (if required) will be provided free of charge to the participants.

10. MOH will gather feedback from event organisers and participants to finetune these processes. If these pilots prove successful, MOH will assess how to make these tests available for more widespread use.

**MINISTRY OF HEALTH
20 OCTOBER 2020**
