

Antigen Testing of asymptomatic children in pods in Early Learning and Care (ELC) and School Age Childcare (SAC) Services where a confirmed case of COVID-19 is identified

Letter to parents

14 December 2021

Dear Parent / Guardian,

This is to inform you of the introduction of a programme of antigen testing in certain circumstances, for children attending Early Learning and Care (ELC) and School Age Childcare (SAC) service. The antigen testing will be available to children in a pod where there is a confirmed case of COVID-19. These measures will be in place from 15 December 2021

If you have a child who is aged 4 years and older, and who is in a pod where there is a confirmed case of COVID 19, you can request a free set of antigen tests for your child. The clinical advice is that antigen testing is not recommended for children under the age of 4 at this time.

You should monitor your children for symptoms of COVID 19. If they develop symptoms, you should ensure that they do not attend their ELC/SAC service and you should get a COVID-19 PCR test for your child. Even if their PCR test is negative, your child should not attend the service until they are 48 hours recovered from their acute symptoms. This is to protect the onward spread of other harmful viral infections with symptoms similar to COVID-19, e.g. RSV.

The most important way to protect against any onward spread of infection is if your child has any symptoms of COVID-19, including a new cough, shortness of breath, high temperature, sore throat, they should isolate at home and you should book a COVID-19 PCR test for them. PCR tests can be booked here: <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/covid19/testing/get-tested/>

Children who have symptoms should not use antigen tests, they should stay at home and you should arrange a PCR test for Covid-19 for them. If a parent/guardian has any concerns about their child, they should contact their GP, as per normal.

If you receive a positive (detected) PCR COVID-19 test result for your child, you should contact the manager of your child's ELC/SAC service immediately to let them know. The service manager will not share the name of the child with a positive PCR test with other parents.

The service manager will contact the parents of the other children in your child's pod, to give them details of how they can order free antigen tests for their children using a Freephone number or an on-line application system. Testing is voluntary and service managers do not need to be informed if a child is taking antigen tests or not.

The children in the pod of the confirmed COVID-19 case can continue to attend their ELC/SAC service as long as they have no symptoms and they do not have a positive COVID-19 test result (antigen or PCR). If at any time, your child develops symptoms they should isolate at home and you should book a COVID-19 PCR test for them. Do this even if the antigen test has a negative (not detected) result.

If your child is in a pod with a COVID-19 case, they can continue to attend their ELC/SAC service as long as they are well, whether they participate in antigen testing or not. The decision to do antigen

testing with your child is your decision as a parent and will have no impact on your child's experience in their ELC/SAC service.

This new voluntary programme of antigen testing is an additional measure and does not replace the very important public health measures currently in your ELC/SAC service.

We continue to ask that you remind your children of the importance of these measures to stop spread of infection.

Yours faithfully

Early Years Division,

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