

## Answering Your Questions

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#### **Question: I think I have symptoms of COVID-19, but I am fully vaccinated. Are a lot of people getting breakthrough cases?**

There is a chance that you could have COVID-19, so I recommend calling Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000 to discuss your symptoms and places near you where you can get tested. Click [here](#) to read about COVID-19 testing locations.

Sometimes people who are unsure about their symptoms feel nervous about calling Telehealth and “wasting the nurses’ time” in case they don’t have the virus. I really encourage anyone to call if they think that there is a chance that they were infected. The nurses at Telehealth would rather you be safe than sorry! If you’re on the fence about calling, feel free to use [this self-assessment tool](#) to help you decide what to do, or to speak with your healthcare provider.\*

Unvaccinated people are more likely to catch COVID-19 than vaccinated people, but many fully vaccinated people are still getting COVID-19 breakthrough cases. Some of them don’t even feel any symptoms and find out during a routine COVID-19 test.

As for specific numbers, [Public Health Ontario](#)’s data on breakthrough cases are as recent as September 4, 2021. For Ontario, 2.7% of breakthrough cases happened to people who were infected less than two weeks after their second dose (1,210 people), and 13.4% of breakthrough cases happened to people who were infected more than two weeks after their second dose (5,879) ([page 5](#)). Click [here](#) to read more about breakthrough cases.

Sources:

1. <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/covid-19-test-and-testing-location-information>
2. <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/self-assessment/>
3. <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/covid-19-test-and-testing-location-information#about-the-test>
4. <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/epi/covid-19-epi-confirmed-cases-post-vaccination.pdf?la=en>
5. [https://www.nydp.ca/uploads/1/5/1/7/15170544/website\\_memo\\_august\\_30.pdf](https://www.nydp.ca/uploads/1/5/1/7/15170544/website_memo_august_30.pdf)

#### **Question 2: Do we have to pay for COVID-19 testing now? How long will the centres do it for free?**

According to the Government of Ontario’s website, “Anyone who needs a test under the provincial testing guidelines can get one at no cost. Depending on your situation, you may be

able to get a COVID-19 test at: COVID-19 assessment centres (including mobile and temporary sites), participating community labs, and participating pharmacies... If you have symptoms or have been exposed to COVID-19, you can get a free test provided by the Government of Ontario at an assessment centre or a participating community lab.”\* The provincial government’s website also says: “The Government of Ontario continues to provide free rapid test kits and free lab-based PCR tests for those who are eligible, including high-risk sectors.”\* Click [here](#) to check if the province’s testing guidelines apply to you.

Here are some times when people would have to pay for a COVID-19 test:

1. People can buy self-test kits, which are PCR tests. The provincial government’s website emphasizes that “You can only use these self-tests if you do not have symptoms and have not been exposed to COVID-19.”\* Click [here](#) to read more about these self-test kits.
2. If you’re travelling internationally, you might need a negative COVID-19 test depending on the laws of the country/countries that you’re visiting. [An article by CTV News](#) summarizes the most recent information about getting tested during the fourth wave based on official updates from the Government of Ontario. This article states that “[t]he cost for the test is typically around \$200. Most pharmacies allow people to book the test through their website or by phone.”\* Travellers have to pay for their own test. This test is available at various pharmacies, including some locations of [Shoppers Drug Mart](#).\*
3. Rapid COVID-19 antigen screening for asymptomatic people costs \$40 at Shoppers Drug Mart locations in Ontario.\* I include it in this list because it is commonly misunderstood as a COVID-19 test. However, “a rapid COVID-19 antigen screen is NOT used to diagnose COVID-19, so it’s different from a COVID-19 test.”\*

If you get a positive result from the rapid COVID-19 antigen screening, it does not confirm a diagnosis of COVID-19 or prevent someone from getting COVID-19.\* To confirm your diagnosis, you must contact Public Health Ontario and go to a COVID-19 Assessment Center to follow up with a COVID-19 test.\* Click [here](#) to read more about this option.

Sources:

1. <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/covid-19-test-and-testing-location-information#about-the-test>
2. [https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/factsheet/2021/07/testing-your-self-for-covid-19/fact-sheet-covid-19-self-testing.pdf?sc\\_lang=en&hash=F1FE321D3D2E74C2C2393493FAF14948](https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/factsheet/2021/07/testing-your-self-for-covid-19/fact-sheet-covid-19-self-testing.pdf?sc_lang=en&hash=F1FE321D3D2E74C2C2393493FAF14948)
3. <https://toronto.ctvnews.ca/how-to-get-tested-for-covid-19-in-ontario-during-the-fourth-wave-1.5562466>
4. <https://covid-19.shoppersdrugmart.ca/en/testing/international-outbound>
5. <https://covid-19.shoppersdrugmart.ca/en/testing/antigen-screening>

If you think you may be experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, take the self-assessment at [www.ontario.ca/coronavirus](http://www.ontario.ca/coronavirus). Follow all directions from your medical provider or your local health unit at the following phone numbers:

Telehealth Ontario: 1-866-797-0000

Toronto Public Health: 416-338-7600

Peel Public Health: 905-799-7700

Durham Region Health Department: 905-668-7711

York Region Public Health: 1-877-464-9675