

New policy regarding rapid Covid-19 tests:

Due to the lack of availability of rapid NAAT (nucleic acid amplification) tests and PCR (polymerase chain reaction) tests, we are not able to order enough for our patient population. We will run out of these tests by early September.

Also, most insurances that we accept are not paying for the costs of these tests. Up until now, our office has covered those costs in an effort to provide this service for our patients. We can no longer do this.

Due to these issues, we have a new policy regarding the use of rapid testing in our office, effective September 7, 2021.

Tanque Verde Pediatrics will remain strict in its policy to recommend the CORRECT test for each Covid exposure or symptomatic patient according to CDC guidelines:

Those **exposed** to Covid-19 from a close contact, whether symptomatic or asymptomatic, will get a send out PCR test at day 3-5 for vaccinated individuals and day 5 for unvaccinated individuals. The day of contact is defined as day ZERO. These results will be available in 1-4 days, depending on the state of the lab. Currently, at the writing of this policy, the wait period for results is 1-2 days. Since isolation of these individuals should be 7-10 days (depending on vaccination status), this test will not delay any return to work or school.

Those who are **symptomatic** but without known close-contact exposure are urged to stay home until their symptoms have resolved. If a Covid-19 test is done, a send out PCR is the gold standard and will be encouraged. Going back to school with a cough or cold symptoms, even if Covid-19 negative, will propagate further office visits by other contacts at school and home. **It is encouraged that if your child is sick, come in on day 0-1 of symptoms to get a PCR test, stay home until that test is resulted, and if negative, return to school if symptoms are improving.**

We will have rapid non-antigen testing available for the following insurances:

Aetna
MHBP

Cigna
Tri Health Net

GEHA-ASA
UHC

Mercy Care

If your child is symptomatic and a rapid PCR or NAAT test is desired, it will not be available in our office if your insurance is not listed above. We encourage you to go to another testing facility (local pharmacy or health department) for testing.

A word about testing options: NAAT and PCR tests are very reliable in symptomatic individuals and slightly less so in asymptomatic individuals. The ANTIGEN tests are 70% likely to find a positive result in a Covid-19 positive person who is symptomatic and 40-50% likely to find a positive result in a Covid-19 positive person who is asymptomatic. If your child is asymptomatic, please do not use a negative antigen test as justification for return to school or work if they have been exposed.

As always, we are available via telemedicine to consult on the type of test that is appropriate for your child. Call our office to schedule that type of appointment. If we are able to do the testing, we can then schedule it the same day, in most instances. If we are unable to do the appropriate testing either due to insurance coverage or availability, we can counsel you on how to obtain the appropriate testing elsewhere.

FAQs:

What can I do if my insurance is not on the list above? If you do not see your insurance on the list above, you can call our office for an office visit to see your child and assess them for other illnesses, as we would for any sick visit. We'll make sure they are hydrated, oxygenating appropriately and have no other issues: strep, allergies, ear infections, sinusitis, pneumonia. If testing is desired, we can do a PCR send out test at that time. If you desire a rapid test, you will need to make other arrangements before or after this visit.

ALSO, you can call your employer, or insurance company and discuss with them the importance of covering testing for everyone who needs it. Having your testing done by your physician, who can correctly interpret it and get your child ready for return to school is important. We regret not having the resources to continue this service for all of our patients. Please let your insurance company know how you feel about this issue as well. We have won the battle for appropriate coverage before - with your help, we may be able to do it again.

How do I know when and what kind of test my child needs? They may not need any test at all or they may need a test that is timed appropriate to avoid the need for retesting and to help isolation and decrease the spread of Covid-19. Please call our office for a telemedicine appointment if you are unsure. If we feel like your child needs to be seen, we will schedule an in-person appointment for testing, evaluation or both on the appropriate date.

How can I help? Please make sure that you are not sending your sick child to school. Early testing can help us isolate those who need it. Please send them to school with masks. Please vaccinate those who are 12 years or older.

Does my school have testing? We know that most districts have available antigen tests for students who are symptomatic. They should be used appropriately for those symptomatic students. If positive, you can believe it. If negative, but your child has signs or symptoms of Covid-19 infection, you may want to consider a confirmatory PCR test. Those are available in our office.

Any news on the vaccine for 11 and unders? We are now hearing that the vaccine for those <12 will not be available before November of 2021 and most likely not until early 2022. We will continue to monitor the situation. Tanque Verde Pediatrics will not be offering off-label use of the Pfizer vaccine. We value your trust and we value scientific facts. We will administer this vaccine only when it has been adequately studied and approved for use in this population. Thank you for your patience and trust in this process and in us.