

Information Sheet for Athletes, Coaches, and Event Directors – USATF COVID-19 Protocols

In response to new medical data related to the Delta and Omicron COVID-19 variants, vaccine effectiveness against the variants, and current levels of community spread, USATF's Event Hosting Guidance was recently updated for all USATF sanctioned events taking place on or after January 7, 2022. The updated guidance states:

- All athlete participants must have a negative COVID-19 nucleic acid amplification (NAAT) test completed within three (3) calendar days of the first day the athlete will compete at the event.
- The only exemption to required COVID-19 testing is a lab/physician verified positive COVID-19 test in last 90 days, and the positive individual must complete either: a) 10 days of recovery and be asymptomatic (no testing required), or b) 5 days of recovery, be asymptomatic, and test negative (can be NAAT or antigen).
- Being fully vaccinated (or boosted) no longer exempts athlete participants from the negative testing requirement.
- NAATs include multiple types of tests, with the most common being PCR and LAMP tests. There are at-home rapid NAAT test options (see examples below). Note that antigen tests will only be accepted if the county of the event has a state government reported 7 day all-test positivity rate 7 days prior to the event of less than 5%.

Non-athlete participants/staff (e.g., officials) only have to test if their duties place them in close contact with athletes (inside of 6 feet for more than 15 minutes in any 24h period). Masking continues to follow CDC guidelines or local / state guidelines, whichever are more stringent.

Why is this change being made now?

The USATF COVID-19 Working Group of medical and scientific experts has been closely examining the emerging data on the Delta and Omicron variants, and the Group has been in discussion with the chief medical officers of several professional sport leagues to review their most recent testing data.

The decision to not exempt vaccinated athletes from testing is based on the substantially reduced effectiveness of the COVID-19 vaccine in protection from both acquiring the Delta and Omicron variants and transmitting the virus to others.

The decision to require testing of all athlete participants within three days of competing was based on recent data that demonstrate the significantly quicker replication time of the Omicron variant in infected individuals.

Why do participating athletes have to use an NAAT test (e.g., PCR, LAMP) and not an antigen test?

Antigen tests were already known to be of a lower sensitivity than NAAT tests, and new FDA and NIH data confirm that antigen tests have a substantially reduced sensitivity to the Omicron variant. This means that there is a significantly higher chance of a false negative test with antigen testing, and thus a greater risk of viral transmission for competing athletes, who are breathing heavily in close proximity to each other. The requirement to use NAAT testing mirrors that of other pro sports leagues (including the NBA and NFL). Many locations that require a negative COVID-19 test for entry (e.g., Hawaii, Canada, and 14 countries in Europe) now specifically require a PCR or other NAAT test.

Where can I obtain an NAAT test?

At-home, rapid NAAT test options: There are several online vendors that sell at-home, rapid RT-LAMP tests for \$75, and many offer next-day delivery for \$29 or less. RT-LAMP tests are NAATs and meet USATF requirements. Insurance companies may now reimburse all or part of the cost of these tests. To locate an online vendor, Google "rapid molecular covid-19 test" and click the Shopping link. Be sure to purchase a test described as a molecular test and not an antigen test.

Laboratory NAAT test options: When making online appointments, be sure the location does NAAT testing (e.g., PCR or LAMP) and estimated results time. Many locations will verify if testing can be billed to insurance / covered for free.

CVS: <https://www.cvs.com/minuteclinic/covid-19-testing>

Walgreens: <https://www.walgreens.com/findcare/covid19/testing>

Quest Diagnostics: <https://patient.questdiagnostics.com/no-cost-covid-test>

Test for Travel: <https://www.testfortravel.com>

What are cost coverage options for testing?

Individuals with private insurance may be able to have claims filed and costs covered when testing at a pharmacy or clinic and may be able to submit claims for test costs for at-home test options (check with your insurer). Note that insurers may not reimburse or cover costs for COVID-19 testing if the insured indicates that they are asymptomatic at the time of testing. Meet management and USATF are not responsible for COVID-19 testing costs.