



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 29, 2022

Dear South Carolina K-12 Schools:

Based on guidance and the latest science from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) is extending use of iHealth COVID-19 antigen rapid tests by additional three months past the printed expiration date. These tests were previously set to expire six months after manufacturing and have now been authorized for safe use up to nine months past manufacturing. To qualify, these tests must be stored at a temperature between 2 and 30 degrees Celsius (35.6 to 86 degrees Fahrenheit).

The FDA in March extended the shelf life of many COVID-19 at-home rapid tests after verifying the tests are still **accurate and safe** to use after the dates on the package. DHEC supports this and asks that schools follow this directive, as well as the usage and disposal guidance on the home test packaging.

It is a common practice for the FDA to reevaluate the viability of various tests, medicines, and other items and confirm these items can safely and adequately be used for longer periods of time than what is specified originally as the expiration date. COVID-19 tests are no exception, and South Carolinians should have no concerns about using them or relying on the test results if performed correctly.

Usage of these tests is important in our efforts to identify positive COVID-19 cases. This is especially true for schools across the Palmetto State, which use at-home tests to verify whether students can continue in-person learning or if they need to isolate for a period of time due to a positive COVID-19 case.

We continue encouraging our schools and all South Carolinians to follow the latest guidance on when to get tested. Those ages 5 and older are also encouraged to get their COVID-19 vaccinations, get boosted if eligible, and follow other health and safety protocols such as hand-washing and wearing a mask during periods of elevated community transmission.

Sincerely,

Brannon Traxler, MD, MPH

Director of Public Health