

31 March 2022

s 9(2)(a)

By email: s 9(2)(a)  
Ref: H202203450

Tēnā koe s 9(2)(a)

### Response to your request for official information

Thank you for your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) received by the Ministry of Health (the Ministry) on 31 March 2022 for:

*“Chris Hipkins is recorded by the herald today as saying that “the older your tests are the less accurate they are”  
Please provide any evidence you hold which suggests that rat tests become less accurate over time, however within their use by date.”*

The Ministry cannot comment on statements made by the Minister for COVID-19 Response. We can however advise that Rapid Antigen Tests typically have a shelf-life of 12-24 months, have clear expiration dates marked on the box and should be discarded if not used by the date of expiration.

Rapid antigen tests, often abbreviated ‘RAT’, detect the presence of specific proteins from the SARS-CoV-2 virus, such as the nucleocapsid or spike protein. These proteins (also called antigens) are present when you have an active COVID-19 infection. The expiry date of a rapid antigen test is determined by the manufacturer based on the validation completed at time of development of the test. The validation will determine the time frame at which the test is most effective at detecting the antigen, from date of manufacture.

Under section 28(3) of the Act you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review any decisions made under this request. The Ombudsman may be contacted by email at: [info@ombudsman.parliament.nz](mailto:info@ombudsman.parliament.nz) or by calling 0800 802 602.

Please note that this response, with your personal details removed, may be published on the Ministry of Health website at: [www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/information-releases](http://www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/information-releases).

Nāku noa, nā



Darryl Carpenter  
**Group Manager**  
**COVID-19 Testing and Supply**