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 சுகாதார அமைச்சு
 Ministry of Health

**Revised screening and laboratory testing strategy for COVID-19 for employees in workplaces
 (First revision- 14th March 2021)**

Revised laboratory testing strategy for COVID-19 for employees in workplaces have been developed to cover the following components.

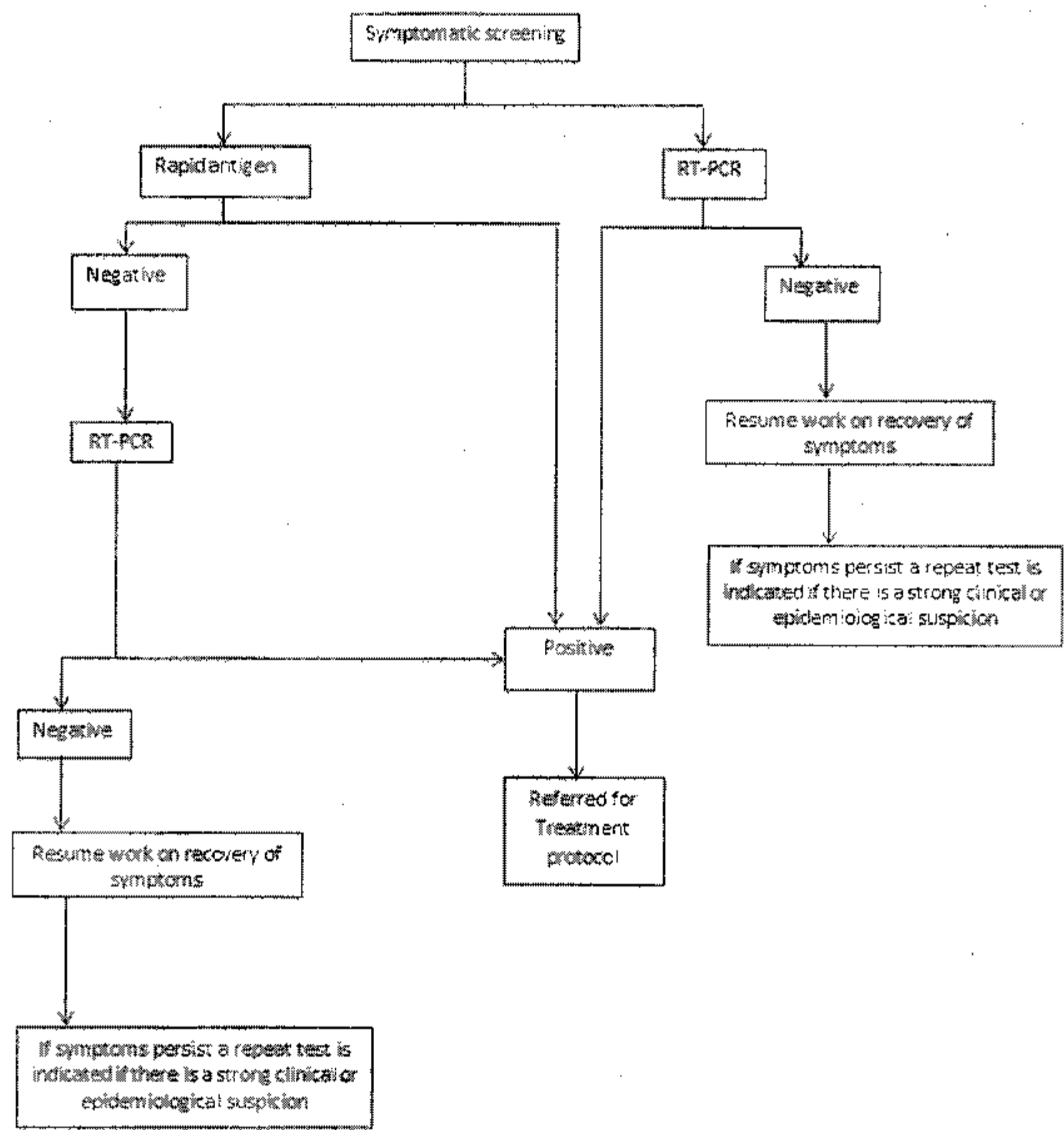
1. Screening and testing of symptomatic employees
2. Testing during an outbreak of COVID 19 at workplaces
 - a. Testing of close contacts (1st line contacts)
 - b. Further random testing of small groups of employees
 - c. Conducting exit PCR for close contacts (1st line contacts) undergoing home quarantine for returning to work
3. Testing of asymptomatic employees for routine surveillance

1. Screening and testing of symptomatic employees

- All workplaces should strictly conduct screening of symptomatic employees suspected of COVID-19 on a daily basis.
- The focal point in case of BOI Industries and management of the other workplaces shall maintain daily records of employees with suspected symptoms of COVID-19 during the last 24 hours and send these records to the area Medical Officer of Health via email on a daily basis.
- The focal point from BOI industries need to send the "Workplace COVID-19 Daily Alert" google form having the number of employees with suspected symptoms during the past 24 hours to the Environmental and Occupational Health Unit via email (eohunit2020@gmail.com) on a daily basis.

- If there are employees with symptoms suspicious of COVID-19, they should not be allowed to work. They should be sent to the nearest government hospital (Divisional hospitals or above) for testing with Rapid Antigen/RT-PCR and further management.
- If the Rapid Ag or the RT-PCR test is positive at hospital, they will be referred to follow the treatment protocol.
- If the Rapid antigen test is negative, the symptomatic employees will be subjected to RT-PCR immediately at the hospital. They should be kept in the hospital adhering to proper infection prevention control methods till the results of RT-PCR is available. If the subsequent RT-PCR test is positive they will be referred for treatment. If RT-PCR is negative they can resume work, once they have recovered from symptoms. However, if symptoms persist or worsen, a repeat test is indicated, if there is strong clinical or epidemiological suspicion.

Figure 1: Testing of all symptomatic employees to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and contain the disease



2. Testing during an outbreak of COVID 19 at workplaces

a. Testing of close contacts (1st line contacts) of confirmed COVID-19 employees

- On detecting a positive employee with COVID-19, all identified close contacts (1st line contacts) need to be screened with rapid antigen test **strictly** under the guidance of the area MOH /Regional Epidemiologist. If the test is positive, they should undergo the treatment protocol. If the test is negative, they should undergo home quarantine and testing to exit the quarantine period should be done as per the current protocol.
- Tracing of first line contacts on detection of **symptomatic COVID-19 cases** and **asymptomatic COVID-19 cases** need to be done as outlined in the below table.

Status	Start date	End date
Symptomatic employees having COVID-19	Two days before the symptoms appear	The last date the COVID-19 positive employee was at work
Asymptomatic employees having COVID-19	Two days before the date on which the sample that led to confirmation of COVID-19 was taken	The last date the COVID-19 positive employee was at work

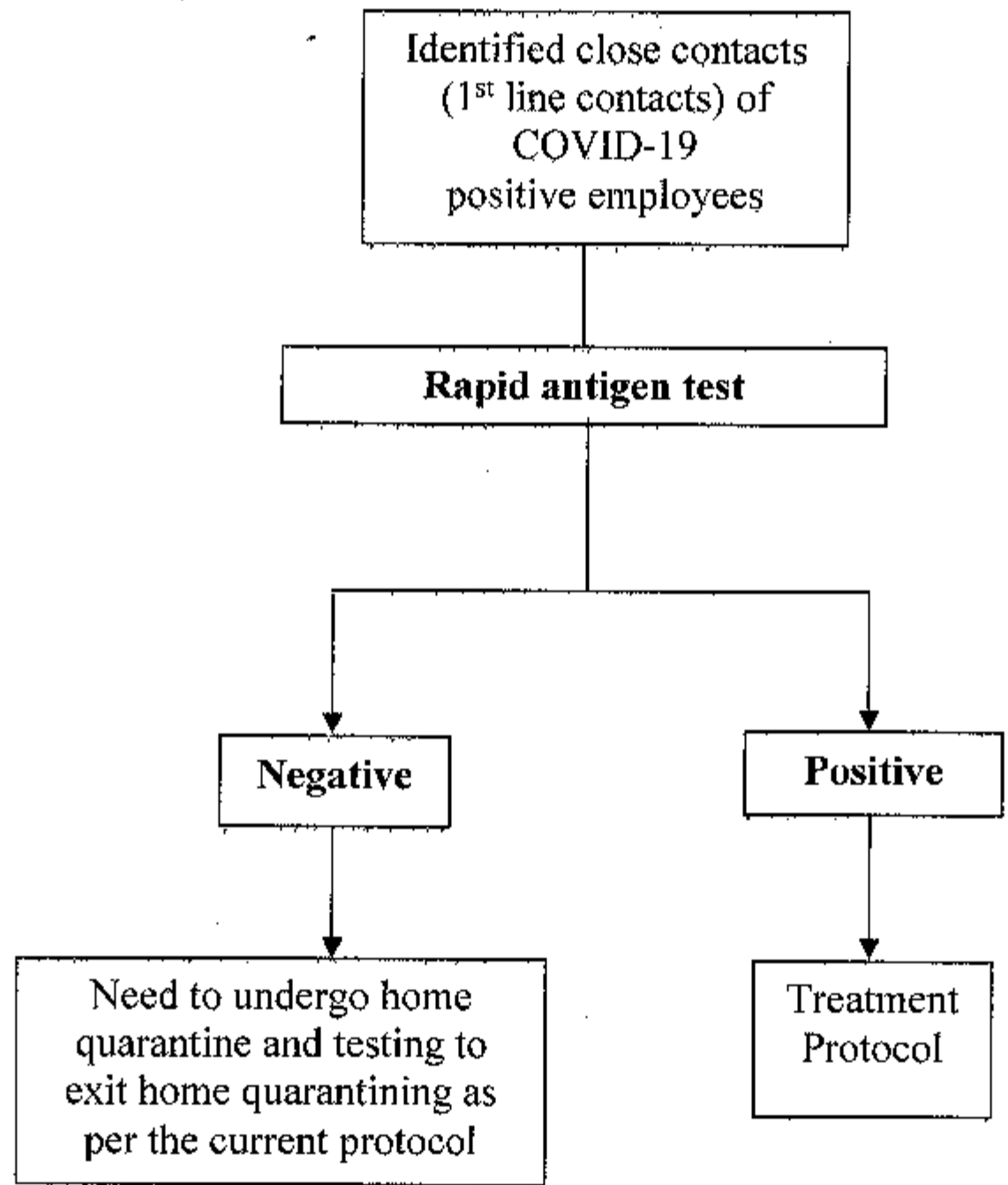
b. Further random testing of small groups of employees during the outbreak

The MOH can decide about this approach in consultation with Consultant Community Physicians and Regional Epidemiologist. RAT can be used for this purpose in a staggered manner. If RT- PCR testing too is needed according to the context, number of samples that can be sent to the laboratory should be discussed with the in-charge Consultant Virologist / Microbiologist of a COVID testing Laboratory.

c. Resuming duty of quarantined close contacts (1st line contacts) when asymptomatic

- Employees can return to work with a negative PCR result done on day 10 from the last exposure to the COVID-19 positive person.

Figure 2: Testing of close contacts (1st line contacts) of confirmed COVID-19 employees



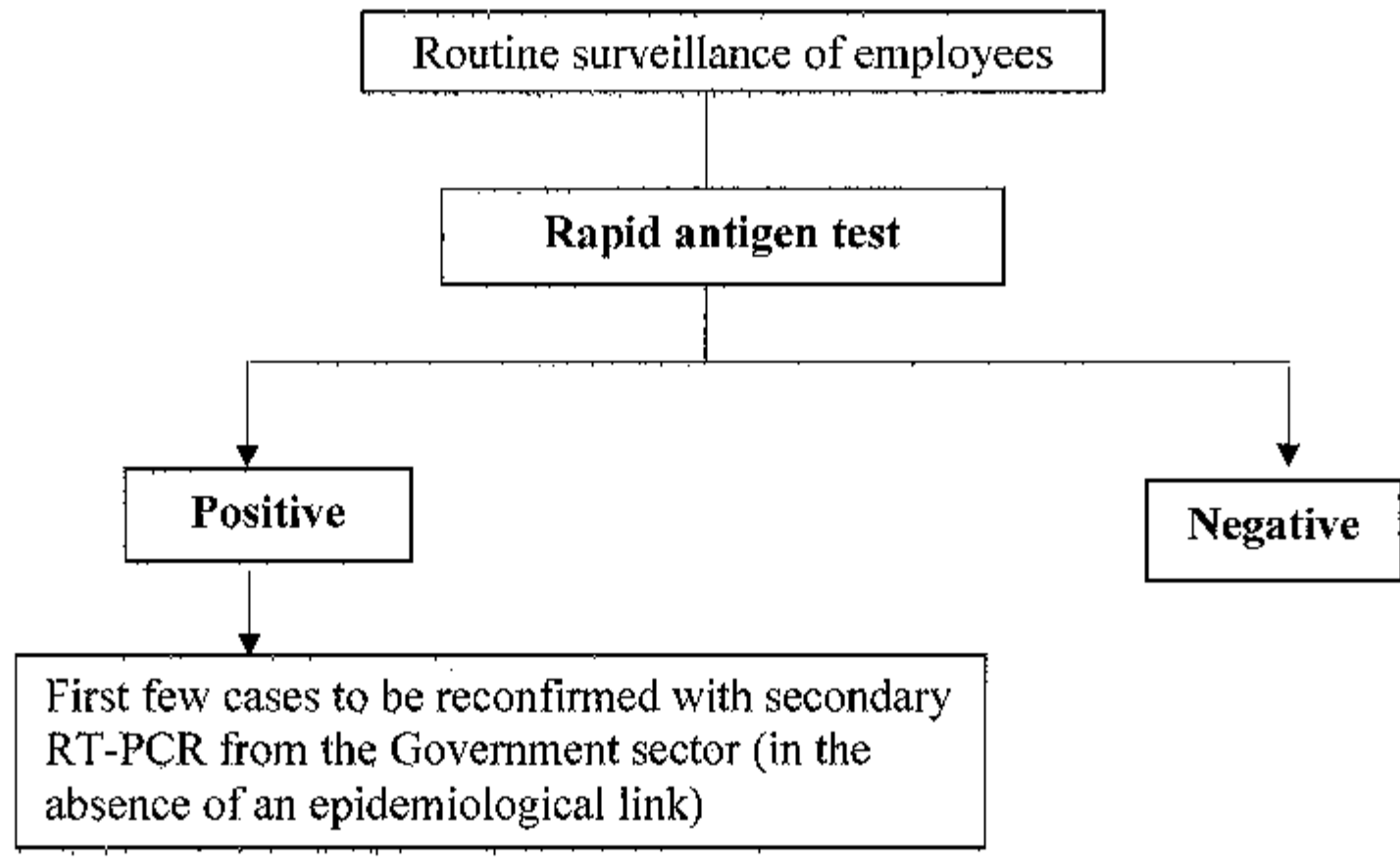
3. Routine asymptomatic testing for surveillance

- Routine asymptomatic testing of employees for surveillance of COVID-19 at workplaces, should be carried out using Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) (WHO approved, locally validated, NMRA registered assays) under the strict guidance of the MOH/Regional Epidemiologist as follows.
 - i. All workplaces, without an ongoing COVID-19 outbreak or no COVID-19 positive cases identified in the workplace during the last 2 weeks need to conduct COVID-19 testing among asymptomatic employees using RAT on a weekly basis as per the instructions outlined in the following table.

Scale of the workplace	Number or % testing to be done with the Rapid Antigen Test
Large scale: 250 or more employees	1% of the total workforce or 15 employees whichever is the higher number
Medium scale: Between 50 -249 employees	10 employees
Small scale: less than 50 employees	5 employees

- ii. Employees coming from high-risk areas/settings and employees generally exposed to settings where there are COVID-19 positive cases should be considered when choosing the sample for testing.
- The results of the RAT should be notified to the area MOH immediately for further action. The first few sporadic cases detected by RAT in a routine asymptomatic surveillance (in the absence of epidemiological link) need to be reconfirmed with secondary COVID-19 RT-PCR assay from the government sector under the guidance of the area MOH/RE. The RAT positive asymptomatic employees need to undergo home isolation/isolated in a place provided by the workplace till subsequent confirmation with RT-PCR is done. The RAT positive employees need to be advised to practice infection prevention and control measures strictly while in isolation. COVID-19 prevention measures in the workplace need to be practiced strictly at all times.

Figure 3: Routine asymptomatic testing for surveillance



This guideline will be reviewed according to the COVID-19 situation in the country. Please ensure that the content of this document is circulated to all relevant categories of staff, in order to take appropriate action.

(Signature)
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