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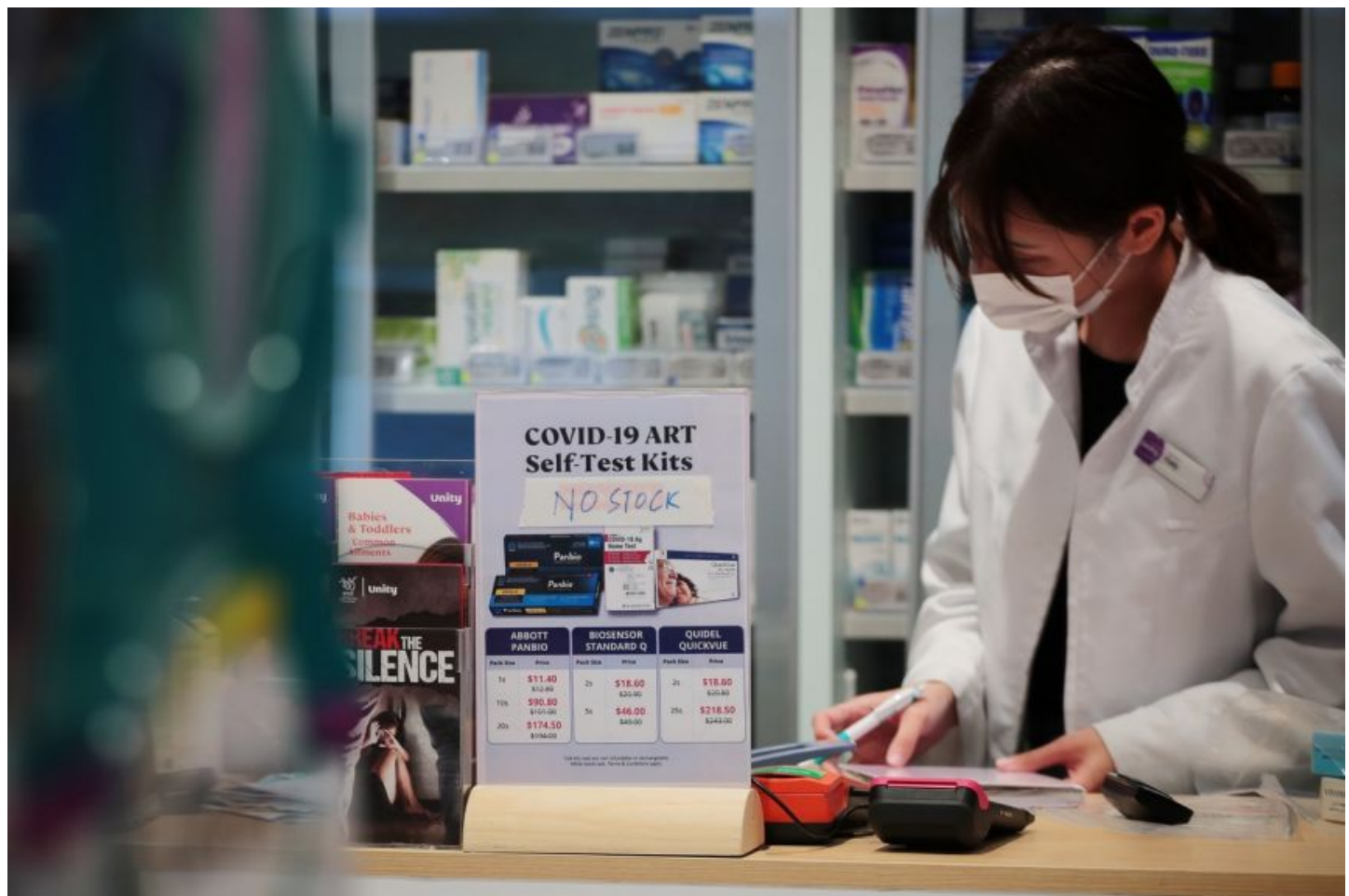


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## ART kits sold out at some retailers in S'pore amid spike in Covid-19 cases; stocks being replenished



A sign saying Covid-19 antigen rapid test kits are out of stock at the Unity pharmacy store at VivoCity on Sept 20, 2021. ST PHOTO: JASON QUAH

Osmond Chia and Isabelle Liew

UPDATED 10 HOURS AGO ▼

SINGAPORE - Antigen rapid test (ART) kits are in short supply in Singapore, with some pharmacies and retailers reporting that their stocks have sold out amid a spike in daily coronavirus cases.

But distributors here said there is no reason to panic buy the kits, as there is adequate stock available locally.

The daily number of infections has surged past the 1,000 mark in the past week, the highest in more than a year.

At least six retailers in Toa Payoh Central, VivoCity and Bukit Panjang had run out of ART kits when The Straits Times visited on Monday (Sept 20).

Demand for the test kits has increased almost fivefold in recent weeks, said spokesmen for Guardian and Watsons, two major health retail chains here, in response to queries from The Straits Times.

The spokesman for Watsons said: "In general, we understand that the market is facing limited stock availability. Stocks that we bring in are sold out very quickly."

Watsons is working with suppliers to replenish stocks and explore alternative providers to boost supplies, she added.

The Guardian spokesman said more stocks will be available this week and assured customers that there are sufficient test kits.

Over at supermarket chain FairPrice, its spokesman said demand for ART kits has more than doubled in the past week compared with the week before.

"This could be due to increased awareness of the self-test kits in the light of the elevated numbers of Covid-19 cases recently in the community," she said.

FairPrice is working with the Health Sciences Authority (HSA) to ensure sufficient supplies and a wider selection of kits to cater to the community's needs, added the spokesman.

Distributors here told ST that there is adequate stock.

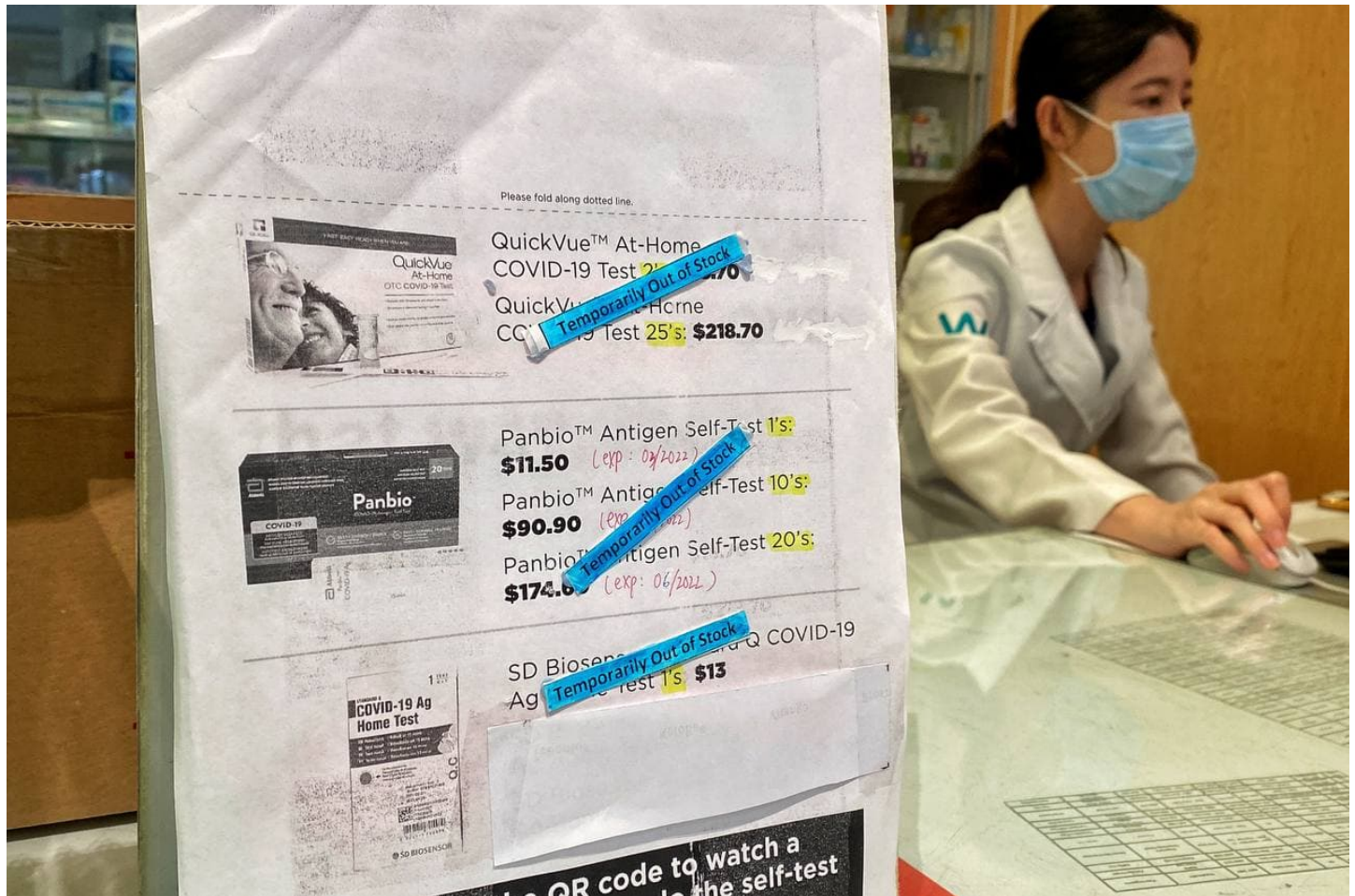
Mr Wayne Yap, the director of pharmaceutical company Unison Collaborative, said there is sufficient stock at its warehouse to meet the orders for ART kits.

The firm distributes Abbott Panbio test kits - one of six brands authorised by HSA.

He said: "The demand for stocks has been very high for some time now and we are working to replenish stocks everywhere.

"Retail outlets that we work with are getting restocked continually."

Some ART kit bundles will also be removed from its "pre-order" list and made available for immediate purchase shortly, he added.



Demand for the test kits has increased almost fivefold in recent weeks with both individual consumers and companies procuring them, said a Watsons spokesman. ST PHOTO: JASON QUAH

Ms Jes Lim, managing director of SPD Scientific, another distributor, told ST that the demand for ART test kits has risen "multiple times" over the past week.

The company received a high volume of orders for its SD Biosensor home test kits from retailers and corporations, such as food and beverage businesses, banks and construction firms, where employees are urged to self-test regularly to prevent transmission at the workplace.



She added: "Demand is high and stocks are getting snapped up, but we are able to replenish them and are working on moving stocks to retailers."

The firm is also working with manufacturers to meet the surge in demand expected in the coming weeks.

The Ministry of Health (MOH) said last week that it has deployed 100 vending machines to 56 locations across the island so that an individual who receives an SMS from MOH informing him that he is required to do a self-test can collect a pack of three ART kits from a location near him.



Vending machines for people to collect their self-test kits at Block 33 Bedok South Avenue 2. ST PHOTO: SYAMIL SAPARI

**List of ART Vending Machine Locations**

1. Admiralty Zone '10' RC	28. MacPherson Zone 'B' RC
2. Ang Mo Kio-Hougang Maple RN	29. Marsiling Zone '4' RN
3. Bedok Reservoir-Punggol Harmony RC	30. Matilda RN
4. Bedok Sunflower RC	31. Membina Court RC
5. Bishan East Zone '3' RC	32. Moulmein Owen RC
6. Boon Lay Zone 'B' RN	33. Nanyang Zone '1' RC
7. Braddell Heights Zone 'E' RC	34. Nee Soon South Zone 'E' RC
8. Bukit Batok Zone '9' RC	35. Pasir Ris Zone '4' RN
9. Bukit Panjang Zone '10' RC	36. Pasir Ris Zone '1' RN
10. Bukit Timah Zone '4' RC	37. Pioneer Zone '11' RN
11. Buona Vista Zone 'C' RC	38. Potong Pasir Zone '3' RC
12. Changi Simei Zone '3' RC	39. Punggol Coral Tree RN
13. Chong Pang Zone '5' RC	40. Punggol Gardens RC
14. Chua Chu Kang Zone '5' RC	41. Rivervale Delta RC
15. Chua Chu Kang Zone '6' RC	42. Rivervale Grove RC
16. Compassvale Aspella RC	43. Sengkang West Zone 'D' RC
17. East Canberra Zone 3 RN	44. Serangoon Green RC
18. Elias View RC	45. Sriville RC
19. Fernvale Zone F RN	46. Taman Jurong Zone 'D' RC
20. Ghim Moh Gardens RC	47. Tampines North Zone '5' RC
21. Havelock View RC	48. Tampines Palmspring RN
22. Hong Kah North Zone '6' RN	49. Tampines-Changkat Zone '7' RN
23. Jurong Central Zone 'A' RC	50. Teck Ghee Centraville RN
24. Jurong Central Zone 'A' RC	51. Toa Payoh Central Zone '2' RC
25. Kaki Bukit Park RC	52. Toa Payoh East Zone '5' RC
26. Kampong Chai Chee Linear Green RN	53. Woodgrove Zone '8' RC
27. Kent Ville RC	54. Woodlands Zone '1' RN
	55. Yew Tee Zone '10' RC
	56. Yishun Hearts RC

GRAPHIC: MINISTRY OF HEALTH

When asked about the stock level of ART test kits running out at local pharmacies, Singapore's director of medical services Kenneth Mak said: "We actually have a lot of test kits, but I think it's just an issue of supply, distribution and allocation."

He was speaking at the Singaporean Researchers Global Summit at the Nanyang Technological University on Monday.

The surge in demand for ART kits comes after Singapore ramped up self-testing efforts to reduce the risk of transmission as people head out to work and gatherings.

Buyers could purchase only up to 10 kits each time when the test kits were made available at retail pharmacies in June. But the cap was lifted when sales were extended to supermarkets and convenience stores in July.

The test kits are being widely distributed by the Government to all residences here between Aug 28 and Sept 27.

The kits were also distributed to pre-school and primary school pupils for them to test themselves before returning to school after the September school holidays.

As part of measures to slow community spread, test kits were also issued to companies in sectors that are not subject to mandatory testing.

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