By Our Reporter

Rwanda Biomedical Centre (RBC) has announced the launch of self testing kits to be distributed by twenty Pharmacies located mostly in Kigali. The kits are now available in the pharmacies at Rwf.4,000 and you can also order one online on kasha.rw while the health ministry will also distribute freely to different sections of the population.

Dr. Sabin Nsanzimana, the head of HIV/AIDS Division at RBC said that they are introducing this new self-testing method to help those feeling shy to seek traditional HIV testing. This is part of efforts in the fight against HIV.

The OraQuick HIV self-test is a single-use device that allows one to know his or her HIV status using mouth swab and provides results in as little as twenty minutes.

Dr. Nsanzimana elaborated how the self-test works during a media briefing at RBC offices, as an easy-to-operate procedure that does not require any expertise and results are interpreted in private.

The system which does not require blood traces the virus in saliva and it is said to be 91 per cent accurate.

HIV prevalence rate in the country has remained relatively low at 3 per cent among adults, Kigali City has the highest prevalence rate at 6.4% and women are at higher risk of HIV infection than men.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) HIV self-testing can help countries meet the UN target of diagnosing 90 per cent of all people with HIV by 2020. Rwanda has set the target higher than the UN target at 95 per cent and already stands at 89 per cent of people tested with HIV.

Globally, it is estimated that only 75% of people living with HIV know their HIV status. Countries are looking for ways to rapidly increase uptake of HIV testing services, especially for populations with low access and those at higher risk that would otherwise not get tested.