



**Office of the  
Chief Medical  
Health Officer**

March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2020

**COVID-19 Update #6**

Thank you for your continued work caring for patients as we move through this COVID-19 pandemic.

**Attached to this newsletter is the new testing criteria issued by the BCCDC as of March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020.**

The new testing criteria may also be accessed using this link [http://www.bccdc.ca/resource-gallery/Documents/Statistics%20and%20Research/Statistics%20and%20Reports/Epid/Influenza%20and%20Respiratory/ERV/BCCDC\\_PHL\\_Updated\\_nCoV\\_Lab\\_Guidance.pdf](http://www.bccdc.ca/resource-gallery/Documents/Statistics%20and%20Research/Statistics%20and%20Reports/Epid/Influenza%20and%20Respiratory/ERV/BCCDC_PHL_Updated_nCoV_Lab_Guidance.pdf)

When new information regarding the testing criteria and any other relevant updates arise, we will inform you as soon as they are announced.

Yours in Health,

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## PHSA Laboratories

BCCDC Public Health Laboratory

A service of the Provincial Health Services Authority

As you are aware, COVID-19 has been declared a global pandemic. Testing is available, but a limited resource. Testing should be performed **ONLY** on symptomatic patients. Please note that infants and children may manifest very minor symptoms.

| <b>Who <i>should</i> be tested for COVID-19?</b>   | <b>Who <i>does not</i> need to be tested for COVID-19?</b>   |
|--|--|
| <p>Patients <b>with respiratory symptoms</b> who are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Hospitalized, or likely to be hospitalized</li><li>2. Health Care Workers</li><li>3. Residents of long term care facilities</li><li>4. Part of an investigation of a cluster or outbreak.</li></ol> <p><i>To prioritize testing label the requisition as coming from:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hospital (label as <u>HOSP</u>)</li><li>• Long-term care facility (label as <u>LTCF</u>)</li><li>• Health Care Worker (label as <u>HCW</u>)</li></ul> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Patients without symptoms. The exception is health care workers with COVID-19 infection who require a negative test after symptom resolution to return to work.</li><li>2. Patients with mild respiratory symptoms, who can be managed at home. This includes returning travellers with an onset of illness within 14 days of return to Canada.</li></ol> |

Note: for long-term care facility outbreaks, collect samples from up to six symptomatic patients to confirm the outbreak

**Please advise patients, with or without a history of travel, who have respiratory symptoms that can be managed at home, to self-isolate at home for at least 14 days after onset of their symptoms.** After 14 days, if their temperature is normal and they feel better, they can return to their routine activities. Coughing may persist for several weeks, so a cough alone does not mean they need to continue to self-isolate for more than 14 days.

**What about household contact of a patient with respiratory symptoms?** People who live in the same household as a patient with respiratory symptoms are at higher risk of being exposed. We are asking household contacts to self-monitor for respiratory symptoms for 14 days, and if respiratory symptoms do develop, to self-isolate. As much as possible, household contacts should distance themselves from the patient (e.g. stay in separate rooms, sleep in separate beds and use separate bathrooms if possible).

### 3) What samples to collect?

In the outpatient setting collect either a **Nasopharyngeal swab (NP: Preferred) OR a Throat Swab**

For patients with severe respiratory illness or hospitalized patients, collect a NP and/or a Throat Swab or sputum, endotracheal aspirate, Bronchoalveolar lavage, etc.

*Given the global swab and collection media shortage, use either the routine Copan NP swabs used for Influenza or other respiratory virus testing, or the skin/mucosal swabs for HSV/VZV viral testing (the containers have a pink liquid in it and a red or blue cap).*

*Or*

*The Hologic Aptima Unisex Swab Specimen Collection Kit used for endocervical and male urethra swab specimen collection. Use the blue swab to obtain an NP, please note that it is harder and less flexible. Insert the swab gently into the deep nares and rotate the swab for 10 to 30 seconds to obtain an adequate sample. Break the swab at the scoreline and place into the transport vial.*

## COVID-19 Guidance on Sample Collection and Testing as of March 15, 2020 at 7 pm

Please ensure that you are using the latest guidance document, available at [http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/coronavirus-\(novel\)](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/coronavirus-(novel))



### 4) Who to advise?

Only regional



call for

consult your Medical

Officer or regional or provincial Medical Microbiologists to provide guidance with regard to possible outbreaks or infection clusters.

Health

### 4) How to protect yourself from a Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) perspective?

Use contact and droplet precautions with a surgical mask and eye protection when collecting a nasopharyngeal or throat swab or sputum. A N95 respirator is recommended for aerosolizing procedures <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/COVID-19-care/infection-control/personal-protective-equipment>

### 5) For information on collection devices and requisitions

Please refer to the BCCDC Public Health Laboratory eLab Handbook under COVID-19 test for specimen requirements. <http://www.elabhandbook.info/phsa/>

Please use the Virology Requisition form and write COVID-19 testing is being requested, OR add a special label to the requisition indicating the need for COVID-19 testing.

<http://www.bccdc.ca/resource-gallery/Documents/Guidelines%20and%20Forms/Forms/Labs/VI%20Reg.pdf>

Submit samples as per routine through your local diagnostic Microbiology Laboratories.

### 6) Contact numbers and responsible agencies

| Person                   | Contact Information   |
|--------------------------|---|
| Regional MHO List        | <a href="https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/bc-medical-health-officers.pdf">https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/bc-medical-health-officers.pdf</a> |
| Regional microbiologists |   |
| BCCDC Med Micro On Call  | Phone: 604-661-7033 (24/7)  |
|                          | Email: <a href="mailto:BCCDC_MicroOncall@bccdc.ca">BCCDC_MicroOncall@bccdc.ca</a>   |
| Approved by              | Mel Kraiden MD, FRCPC   |

For up to date information on COVID-19 please refer to:

[http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/coronavirus-\(novel\)](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/coronavirus-(novel))