

## Priority testing for COVID 19 Update – May 14

Priority COVID 19 testing on the GeneXpert platform can now be ordered but there is very limited availability (50–70 tests per week per zone). Total turnaround time (collection, transport, testing and reporting of results) is approximately 2–6 hours.

Feedback has indicated too many scenarios and site-specific logistics exist at present to be amenable to a workable provincial algorithm.

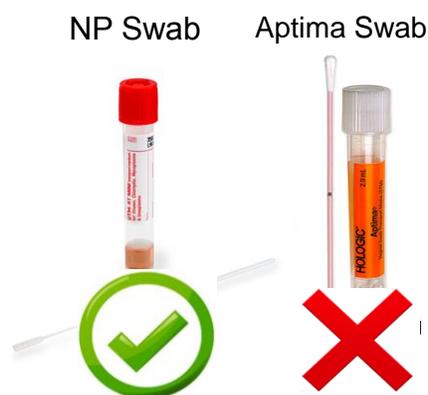
The provincial laboratory program recommends that the Zones and sites exercise local decision-making around priority COVID-19 test usage. Provincially, consistent principles should guide test usage (i.e., PPE conservation and patient flow). Stewardship of this will rest with the clinicians. If priority tests are depleted, testing will be routed to the normal process.

Priority COVID-19 testing does not require approval from the laboratory or infectious diseases. The following process should be followed:

**Which swab should be used?:** **NP swabs must be used** – keeping in mind the number of swabs are very limited and the decision to order priority testing must be carefully considered. The alternate throat/nares swab (Aptima) is 100 times less sensitive. GeneXpert is not validated for sputum testing.

**How do I order it?:** On the **requisition and on the outside of the plastic sample bag** indicate **“Urgent COVID 19 GeneXpert Test”** and call the lab indicating a priority test is on its way. Calling after the swab has arrived in the lab introduces delays – requiring the process to stop and identify the specimen – and is not always possible.

**What if a throat/nares swab is received?:** If the Aptima swab is sent for priority testing and identified prior to entering the system, every effort will be made to send the QEII laboratory as soon as possible to be put to the front of the queue. It cannot be tested on the geneXpert locally



What happens if we run out of GeneXpert tests?: Until the supply chain of these kits can be increased the estimated supply is 50–70 tests per zone each week. Tests will be performed based on requests and once the GeneXpert test are no longer available, the QEII laboratory will make every effort to put the specimen to the front of the routine testing que as described above. There is capacity to run 1500 “routine” test per day.

If GeneXpert testing supply becomes sustainable and long-term it will be possible for all of us to (virtually) get together and develop provincial algorithms.