

Questions related to Pathology and Laboratory Medicine for Continuing Care (DHW licensed/funded long term care facilities)-Covid-19 Swab Collections

Last Updated: June 4, 2020

Changes include:

- Include link to Sample Collection Kit poster to #1
- Updated information on email for negative results in #7
- Update of the infographic for completing specific fields in #7

1. There are two swabs being sent to us, what are the difference and how should we use them?

The Nasopharyngeal swab (NPS) (viral transport swab kit) is the traditional swab for influenza testing. Given the limited supply of these swabs we have validated an alternative; the alternate Aptima (HOLOGIC) multitest swab kit can be used for Throat/nares testing only. They cannot be used for NPS. Instructions on their use can be found here:

[Collection Instructions for Nasopharyngeal Swabs](#)
[Collection Instructions for Alternate Collection of Throat and Nares Swabs with Aptima Multitest](#)
[COVID-19 Sample Collection Kits](#)

2. Which swab should we use for testing?

- **COVID-19 testing** - Either the NPS in viral transport or the Throat/nares swab using the Aptima multitest kit can be used for detection of COVID-19.
- **Influenza A testing** - For ILI/INFLUENZA testing - Limit 3 swabs per investigation working with your Public Health contact routine ILI process and sample submission. *If possible* the viral transport of NPS swabs should be collected from residents who you suspect to have influenza as not all regional labs that test for influenza can use the APTIMA swabs. If there are not NPS viral swab available, the throat/nares swab can be sent to the QEII for testing.

3. Where do we order swabs?

There is no change in the process of ordering swabs. You can follow your usual process used during regular influenza seasons.

- Central Zone – order direct from Central Zone (CZ) QEII Microbiology laboratory using the form in Appendix A below.
- Eastern/Northern/Western Zones – order direct from your local/regional

laboratory.

The NPS (viral transport swab kit) and the alternate Aptima (HOLOGIC) multitest swab kit can be used for COVID-19 testing. Laboratories will distribute either swab based on provincial availability.

4. How many swabs should I have on hand to be prepared?

Facilities should have five swabs that can be used to rapidly collect samples from residents suspected of having infection. Once a case is confirmed, Public Health will coordinate testing and more swabs can be obtained as described above. Swabs are an important resource and we want to discourage stockpiling swabs, allowing them to be available for distribution as needs arise.

5. How many swabs should I have for an active COVID-19 investigation?

Work with your facility medical director and Public Health to determine your needs. Communicate this with your local laboratory when you place your order.

6. What laboratory requisition do I complete?

Complete the COVID-19 requisition for Continuing Care for your zone.

[Lab Requisition - Continuing Care - CZ](#) [Lab Requisition - Continuing Care - EZ](#)

[Lab Requisition - Continuing Care - NZ](#) [Lab Requisition - Continuing Care - WZ](#)

For a complete list of COVID-19 ID Assessment Centres [Lab Requisitions](#) by zone, visit the COVID-19 Hub.

7. **Updated** What information is important to complete on the laboratory requisition?

- Ensure all the information requested on the requisition is complete and legible (see requisition example below). The authorized requestor's signature (Dr. Watson-Creed) is not required as this falls under the [Care Directive](#). The signature of the person collecting the sample is acceptable in this circumstance.
- Label the specimen with the official name and date of birth of the person being swabbed, along with their health card number. Ensure the information on the specimen matches the information on the requisition.
- Include the facility name/site/other
- Ensure the contact number of the person being swabbed is accurate and legible to ensure Public Health can contact the person.
 - There is now the option of providing negative results via email. To utilize this service, ensure the person's email is clearly written in the contact field
- Indicate if the individual is a resident or staff
- Outbreak number, if provided by Public Health
- Ensure the "Copy to clinician" is completed – e.g., facility medical director to facilitate access to results

nova scotia health authority
Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine
Laboratory Requisition

All information in this grey patient information area must be completed in full for all clients (e.g., HCW or resident/patient)

Ensure Copy to clinician/practitioner is completed

Collect patient contact information in full.

can be a nursing/collector signature, authorized requestor's signature not required as per the care directive

Collected by information must be completed in full. Outbreak investigation must be filled out if part of an outbreak.

REASON FOR TESTING / OTHER INFORMATION :

Continuing care
 Resident or Staff / HCW
 Facility / Site / Other: e.g., LTC Northwood Halifax
 For admission to HC/LTC
 Pre-op swab; surgery date (YYYY / MM / DD): _____

Examination requested

8. Are there any collection or shipping tips/instructions?

- One specimen per bag with accompanying laboratory requisition in the outside pouch.
- Group COVID-19 ONLY requests together for shipment.
- Don't delay in shipping samples to your local lab. Reach out to them to understand their shipping schedules. Communicate with the lab and Public Health for urgent facility investigations.

9. How frequently is COVID-19 testing performed?

All testing for the province currently occurs at the CZQEI Microbiology laboratory in Halifax. Testing operations are supported 24/7.

10. How long does it take to get my results?

Once the swab arrives to the QEII Microbiology lab, your results should be available in 12 hours. It is important to send the swabs as soon as possible to the laboratory to maximize turnaround times.

11. How do I obtain laboratory results?

All results are entered into the SHARE portal and Meditech when they are completed. Physicians who do not have access should request this through the IM/IT group.

- Authorized Prescribers can contact Central zone laboratory reporting phone line: 902-473-2266.
- Contact Public Health. In the context of an outbreak investigation, your Public Health contact will be a valuable link to obtain result updates.

Other considerations: Consider compiling line lists of your facility residents and staff including health card numbers and date of birth in a Microsoft Excel format. This may be valuable in working through investigations with Public Health and the lab.

12. How can Health Care Workers (HCWs) ensure their swabs are properly identified as a HCW?

HCWs that are directed to the assessment centres for collection fall under 'assessment site submissions' and enter the queue of overall specimens. At that time, they are flagged as HCWs by the Public Health staff.

Fully completing the submitting requisition is key (see question 7). Ensure inclusion of the following information:

- Patient's full name and proper identifiers (DOB, health card #), phone #, etc.
- Public Health outbreak # (if provided by Public Health)
- Facility / site / other setting : i.e. LTC Northwood Halifax
- Health care worker or resident – indicate this in the reason for testing/other information section
- Reason for referral: i.e. active COVID-19 outbreak in "X" LTC facility

13. Do Health Care Workers (HCWs) have priority on lab submissions?

Outbreak batches of swabs are prioritized, which may include HCWs. The CZ QEII Microbiology Laboratory continues to prioritize LTC facilities when identified – in particular outbreaks where special batching and/or shipments are made.

14. How is Public Health notified of the results?

All lab results (negative and positive) reported from the lab system flow to Public Health in various formats and times to align with their downstream processes.

For direct use only if in Central Zone (Halifax, Eastern Shore and West Hants)
Other Zones should order kits from your Local / Regional Lab



VIRAL TRANSPORT SWAB KIT ORDER FORM (September 2016)

FAX ORDER TO: 902-473-7971

All requested information must be completed in full; otherwise order will not be filled.

SHIPPING INFORMATION (Ship to):		SHIPPING INSTRUCTIONS:	
Name:			
Address:			
Postal Code:			
Phone:			
Contact Name:			
*COURIER INFORMATION:			
*Courier Name:			
*Courier Account #			
*Courier Phone #			
QUANTITY OF SWAB KITS REQUESTED:		LAB USE ONLY:	
	Swabs Requested		Swabs Shipped
			Date Shipped
			Expiration Date
			Initials

ORDERING INFORMATION

- Please fax request using the "Viral Transport Swab Kit Order Form"
 - Fax to (902) 473-7971.
 - Order in single units of swabs, NOT in cases or boxes.
- When ordering please keep in mind the following:
 - The viral transport swab kits have components that have a short shelf-life and therefore have expiry dates. Please order according to your needs instead of "stock-piling".
- Orders will be processed and mailed using Canada Post and should arrive in 1-2 weeks.
- *If you prefer a courier service, please indicate your courier name / account number and the courier phone number in the courier information area of the order form.
- All orders received are subject to verification. The quantities ordered may be subject to change depending on provincial supplies.

Nova Scotia Health Authority – QEII Health Sciences Cnt - Division of Microbiology - Viral Swab Contact Information
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