



Laboratory Testing Guidance for COVID-19

Who can be tested for COVID-19?

- The Public Health Ontario lab will only accept specimens for COVID-19 from the following individuals:
 - Meeting criteria for person under investigation (PUI) or probable case (see definition on back)
 - Not meeting the case definition but are at risk of COVID-19
 - **Note: routine testing of asymptomatic individuals is not recommended**
- Consultation with the MD/NP is required prior to the collection of sample
 - All individuals being tested **must** be reported to the CD nurse

How to collect the specimen?

- Collect the specimen using a nasopharyngeal swab (NPS) or viral throat swab
 - NPS is preferred due to higher sensitivity for COVID-19 detection
- Serology for COVID-19 is not available

What does the sample test?

- The sample is tested for COVID-19
- If the health care provider requests it, the sample can be tested for other respiratory viruses, such as, avian influenza and RSV

What lab requisition do I use?

- Use the Public Health Ontario COVID-19 Test Requisition, available on Onehealth, or at: <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/lab/2019-ncov-test-requisition.pdf>
- The following information **must** be included in the requisition:
 - ✓ Whether individual meets criteria for a person under investigation (yes/no)
 - ✓ Travel history (country and dates)
 - ✓ Contact of case or probable case (yes/no); if no, other sick contact (yes/no; if yes, describe)
 - ✓ Clinical information (e.g. fever, cough, rhinorrhea, pneumonia)
 - ✓ Patient setting (inpatient – ICU or ward, hospitalized, ER not admitted, physician office/clinic, institution or outpatient)

How long will it take for the results?

- Testing for COVID-19 is performed at PHO Laboratory Toronto as required
- **NOTE:** Turnaround time varies according to geographical location and proximity to PHO Lab in Toronto
- Laboratory confirmation of COVID-19 occurs at PHO Laboratory
 - Additional testing is conducted at the National Microbiology Laboratory (NML) in Winnipeg when required

What are the reporting requirements for the testing laboratory?

- Test results are reported to the ordering health care provider as indicated on the requisition
- As a disease of public health significance, all positive results will be reported to the local public health unit, who will report it to the FNIHB CD Unit. As an interim measure, PHO will also be reporting all negative results to the local public health unit

**For more information, contact the CD nurse, nursing practice consultant,
or Public Health Ontario lab at 1-877-604-4567**



Case Definition – Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

These case definitions* are for surveillance purposes and they are current as of February 26 2020. They are not intended to replace clinical or public health practitioner judgment in individual patient assessment and management.

A. Person under Investigation

A person with fever and/or onset of cough or difficulty breathing **AND** any of the following within 14 days prior to onset of illness:

- Travel to an impacted area* **or**
- Close contact with a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19. **or**
- Close contact with a person with acute respiratory illness who has been to an impacted area*

B. Probable Case

A person with fever (over 38 degrees Celsius) and/or onset of (or exacerbation of chronic) cough **AND** any of the following within 14 days prior to onset of illness:

- Travel to an impacted area* **or**
 - Close contact with a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 **or**
 - Close contact with a person with acute respiratory illness who has been to an impacted area*
- AND**
- In whom laboratory diagnosis of COVID-19 is not available, inconclusive, or negative (if specimen quality or timing is suspect)

C. Presumptive Confirmed Case

A person in whom the laboratory testing for COVID-19 was positive from the Public Health Ontario Laboratory but not yet confirmed (see Footnote 9).

D. Confirmed Case

A person with laboratory confirmation of COVID-19 infection performed at a reference laboratory (e.g. The National Microbiology Laboratory or Public Health Ontario Laboratory) and consists of positive real-time PCR on at least two specific genomic targets, or a single positive target **AND** additional detection with nucleic acid sequencing. Positive laboratory tests at a non-reference laboratory require additional testing at a reference laboratory for confirmation.

References

- Public Health Ontario. (2020) Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) testing. Available at, <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/laboratory-services/test-information-index/wuhan-novel-coronavirus#TestFrequencyandTurnaroundTime>
- Ministry of Health. (2020). Case definition – Novel coronavirus (COVID-19). Available at, http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/2019_case_definition.pdf