
SUBJECT: COVID-19: Alternate Specimen Collection Kits & Physician Services
Date: March 18, 2020
Pages: 2
To: Primary Care Providers, Emergency Departments, Hospitals, Infection Control Practitioners
From: Dr. Nicola Mercer, Medical Officer of Health and CEO

Alternate Specimen Collection Kits for COVID-19

Nasopharyngeal (NP) swabs for COVID-19 should be collected using Virus Respiratory Kit order # 390082, if available. However, given the limited supply of kits across the province, Public Health Ontario has done a limited evaluation on some alternative specimen kits that may be used for COVID-19 testing:¹

- Chlamydia trachomatis Culture - Female Kit order #: 390083
- Chlamydia trachomatis Culture - Male Kit order #: 390084
- Mycoplasma pneumoniae/Chlamydophila pneumoniae PCR Kit order #: 390085
- Roche PCR Media Uniswab Kit order #: 300295 (vendor catalogue 07958021190)
- Bordetella pertussis BP Kit order #: 390052

PHO Laboratory will accept other swab types (except cotton-tipped swabs) and other liquid transport media (except gel or solid media) for COVID-19 testing; however, if the submitted swab and/or media type were not validated at PHO Laboratory for COVID-19 testing, the results will be reported with a disclaimer.

These alternative kits can be used to collect nasal or NP specimens for COVID-19 testing. If using a large swab, a nasal specimen will suffice – please do not force collection of an NP specimen if doing so may cause trauma to the patient. If using a small swab, an NP specimen is preferred.

Please refer to PHO Laboratory's COVID-19 Test Information Sheet for additional details. Additional kits can be ordered using the Requisition for Specimen Containers and Supplies Form, available on PHO's website.

Physician Services during a Public Health Emergency

Yesterday, the Premier declared a province-wide state of emergency in response to the threat posed by COVID-19. The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario has outlined the professional expectations that apply to physicians during public health emergencies.²

In order to manage health system capacity during a pandemic, WDGPH is reminding physicians to continue to provide medical care that addresses the urgent and emergent needs of their patients. It is important that patients with acute respiratory illness or other acute symptoms not be denied care; if you are not able to provide them care yourself, please make the appropriate referral or coverage arrangements.

Public Health does not provide primary care services and telling your patients to call Public Health is not an appropriate coverage arrangement for urgent medical needs. Physicians are encouraged to use the new OHIP billing codes for telephone or video assessments.³

Email Delivery of Physician Communications

If you would like to receive Physician Advisories and Updates by email, please send a message that includes your name, CPSO number and email address to communications@wdgpublichealth.ca. Your CPSO number is requested only so that we can verify your identity as a physician.

References

1 - <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/laboratory-services/test-information-index/wuhan-novel-coronavirus>

2 - <https://www.cpso.on.ca/Physicians/Policies-Guidance/Policies/Public-Health-Emergencies>

3 - <http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/ohip/bulletins/4000/bul4745.aspx>

For more information, refer to contact or website:

Name/Title: WDG Public Health, Physicians Call Centre

Contact: 1-800-265-7293 ext. 7011 / www.wdgpublichealth.ca