

SUBJECT: Updated HIV Testing Guidelines for Ontario
Date: May 18, 2023
Pages: 3 plus attachment
To: Primary Care Providers, Hospitals
From: Dr. Matthew Tenenbaum, Associate Medical Officer of Health

- **New HIV Testing Guidelines for Ontario are now available.**
- **The window period for lab-based serologic HIV tests is now 6 weeks.**
- **HIV point-of-care (POC) testing can be accessed at the WDGPB clinic in Guelph.**
- **Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) must be initiated within 72 hours of a high risk exposure and can be accessed through local emergency departments.**
- **Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) should be considered for those at ongoing high risk of infection. Resources exist to support community prescribers. Patients can also be referred to HIV/AIDS Resources & Community Health (ARCH).**

Last month, the Ontario HIV Treatment Network (OHTN) and Ministry of Health issued [updated guidelines](#) for providers offering HIV testing. The guidelines focus on four scenarios where HIV testing is recommended, based on symptoms and risk:

1. Identifying **new or recent infections** in individuals with symptoms or high risk exposures;
2. Identifying **chronic infections** in individuals with indicator conditions;
3. Testing **populations experiencing higher rates of HIV infection**; and
4. Testing in **specific care situations** where the outcome would impact care.¹

A [one-page summary algorithm](#) of the new guidelines are included as an attachment.

When to Test following a Possible HIV Exposure

Due to lab advances, the window period for patients receiving lab-based serologic testing has been shortened from three months to six weeks.¹ These patients should be tested using a **3-6 approach**:

At baseline → 3 weeks after exposure → 6 weeks after exposure

Patients using only point-of-care (POC) or self-tests still have a window period of three months and should be tested using a **3-6-3 approach**:

At baseline → 3 weeks after exposure → 6 weeks after exposure → 3 months after exposure

Accessing HIV Point-of-Care (POC) Testing

Patients can access point-of-care (POC) testing at WDGPH's Guelph clinic (160 Chancellors Way) by booking an appointment (**1-800-265-7293 ext. 7006**).

Accessing Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP)

Individuals with a high-risk HIV exposure in the **past 72 hours** should be considered for post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP), in addition to being tested for HIV.^{1,2} An assessment algorithm for PEP is included on page 12 of the [new HIV guidance](#). PEP should be started **as soon as possible** following the exposure.

In WDG, PEP can be accessed through local hospital emergency departments at:

- Guelph General Hospital 115 Delhi St., Guelph
- Headwaters Health Care Centre 100 Rolling Hills Dr., Orangeville
- Louise Marshall Hospital 630 Dublin St., Mount Forest
- Groves Memorial Community Hospital 131 Frederick Campbell St., Fergus
- Palmerston and District Hospital 500 Whites Rd., Palmerston

Accessing Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP)

Individuals at ongoing high risk for HIV infection should be considered for pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP). These individuals include (but are not limited to) MSM who report condomless anal sex within the last six months and with any of:

- Infectious syphilis or rectal bacterial STI, particularly if diagnosed in the preceding 12 months;
- Recurrent use of nonoccupational HIV PEP (more than once);
- Ongoing sexual relationship with HIV-positive partner with substantial risk of transmissible HIV; or
- [High-incidence risk index \(HIRI\)-MSM risk score](#) ≥ 11 .²

Resources for physicians about how to prescribe PrEP and provide appropriate follow up are available from OHTN at ontarioprep.ca/for-health-care-providers/.

If you are not able to prescribe PrEP, you can refer your patients to HIV/AIDS Resources & Community Health (ARCH) at **519-780-5298**.

References:

1. HIV Testing Ontario. Ontario Guidelines for Providers Offering HIV Testing, accessed May 17, 2023. Available at: <https://hivtestingontario.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Ontario-HIV-Testing-Guidelines-for-Providers.pdf>
2. Canadian Medical Association Journal. Canadian guideline on HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis and nonoccupational postexposure prophylaxis, November 27, 2017. Available at: <https://www.cmaj.ca/content/189/47/E1448>

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