

## COVID-19 Testing in Primary Care Offices

### Testing Guidance

Testing should be offered to, or arranged for, all patients with new or worsening symptoms that are compatible with COVID-19 where possible and appropriate. Testing should also be offered to, or arranged for, asymptomatic contacts of a confirmed case.<sup>1</sup>

Reference the most recent [COVID-19 Provincial Testing Guidance Update](#) for guidance on assessing and managing patients considered to be at higher risk, including priority population groups.<sup>1</sup> Bookmark the [COVID-19 Reference Document for Symptoms](#) for the latest version of the symptom list, including exceptions related to underlying conditions.

The most recent provincial testing guidance provides updated recommendations regarding who should be tested. Priorities for testing include:

- Any person presenting with at least one sign or symptom of COVID-19.
- Contacts of confirmed COVID-19 cases, as recommended by WDGPH.
- Individuals linked to COVID-19 outbreaks, as recommended by WDGPH.
- Other individuals for whom testing is recommended based on provincial direction.

### Swab Supplies

To order COVID-19 swab kits please use the [Ontario Health – West Region Swab Order Form](#). To submit a request on behalf of a primary care practice, you will need to select “other” in both the “organization name” and “sector of care” fields. Once the order is submitted, supply chain staff will review and prepare an order meeting your anticipated needs and deliver your swabs directly to your facility within approximately 72 hours.

### Swab Collection

Nasopharyngeal (NP) swab collection is not considered an aerosol-generating procedure and therefore can be performed using Droplet and Contact Precautions (i.e., gloves, isolation gown, surgical/procedure mask, and eye protection). Refer to Public Health Ontario’s resource on [Virus Respiratory Kit \(Nasopharyngeal\) Specimen Collection Instructions](#) for more information.

- Place specimen in the bag with the fully completed COVID-19 Virus Test Requisition placed in the attached pouch.
- Pre-label the swab so that it can simply be dropped into the bag without further handling once the swab is obtained.<sup>1</sup>

Refer to Public Health Ontario’s resource on [Respiratory Outbreak Testing Prioritization](#) to find out how to prepare COVID-19 outbreak specimens for testing.

## **Completing a COVID-19 Virus Test Requisition**

You must use a current version of the Public Health Ontario [COVID-19 Virus Test Requisition](#) for all COVID-19 tests. Accurate submitter and patient information are both required to ensure patients receive timely results.<sup>2</sup>

For step-by-step instructions on how to complete the COVID-19 Virus Test Requisition, refer to the [Public Health Ontario Fact Sheet](#).

## **Swab Handling & Transportation**

- Specimens should be stored at 2-8°C following collection.<sup>3</sup>
- Specimens must be transported to a testing laboratory within 72 hours of collection.
- Specimens may be sent to a Public Health Ontario Laboratory (PHOL) or another suitable laboratory with COVID-19 testing capacity.
- COVID-19 specimens must be transported in a cooler with an icepack. Office staff may drop off the specimens or you may use a medical courier for transport
- **Do not send specimens with clients.**

The transport of laboratory specimens is regulated by the Canadian Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act and Regulations (TDG). This legislation requires packaging that will protect specimens during transport and prevent contact with the public and the environment. This is accomplished by using the following 3-part packaging system:

1. A primary leak-proof container (specimen collection container).
2. A secondary leak-proof container (resealable plastic bag) to contain any leakage in the event of damage.
3. A rigid outer packaging (specimen transport box) to protect specimens from damage if package is dropped.

## **What will happen if a test result comes back positive?**

If your fully immunized staff have used droplet and contact precautions and have instituted other public health measures in your office (mandatory masks, limiting people and physical distancing in the waiting room) then you will not be required to self-isolate. Healthcare workers should self-monitor for symptoms at all times.

## **For More Information**

- Ministry of Health – [COVID-19 Guidance: Primary Care Providers in a Community Setting](#)
- Public Health Ontario – [COVID-19 PCR Collection Kits](#)
- Public Health Ontario – [Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) – PCR](#)
- Ontario Health – [Personal Protective Equipment and Swab Kit Supply Information for Ontario Health Community Providers](#)

## Options for Swab Drop-Offs

Please see options below for where/when to drop-off specimens for COVID-19 testing.

Locations	Details	Drop-Off Dates/Times
<b>Existing Couriers &amp; Routes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use your existing couriers and routes that you use for handling all other PHOL samples.</li> <li>This may add 2-5 days to the turnaround time for results.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Arrange with your courier service.</li> </ul>
<b>Existing Lab Courier</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use your existing lab courier and confirm that COVID-19 specimens are able to be transported to the lab within the required 72-hour window to avoid sample spoilage.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Arrange with your courier service.</li> </ul>
<b>WDG Public Health Offices</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Addresses:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>160 Chancellors Way, <b>Guelph</b> ON, N1G 0E1</li> <li>180 Broadway, <b>Orangeville</b> ON, L9W 1K3</li> <li>490 Charles Allan Way, <b>Fergus</b> ON, N1M 2W3</li> </ul> </li> <li>If you drop off specimens between 12:00-1:00 p.m. in our Orangeville or Fergus offices, please call 1-800-265-7293 ext. 0 on arrival, and reception will assist you.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monday to Thursday 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.</li> <li>Friday Before 10:30 a.m.</li> </ul>
<b>Guelph Assessment Centre</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Address:</b> 400 Southgate Dr, Guelph, ON N1G 4P5</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Friday, Saturday &amp; Sunday Before 4:00 p.m.</li> </ul>
<b>Headwaters Assessment Centre</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Address:</b> 100 Rolling Hills Dr, Orangeville, ON L9W 4X9</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monday to Thursday Before 8:45 p.m.</li> <li>Friday Before 5:45 p.m.</li> </ul>
<b>Wellington Assessment Centres &amp; Hospitals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Palmerston and District Hospital</b> 500 Whites Rd, Palmerston, ON N0G 2P0</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monday to Friday Before 2:45 p.m.</li> <li>Saturday to Sunday Before 4:45 p.m.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Harriston Assessment Centre</b> 83 Arthur St W, Harriston, ON N0G 1Z0</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tuesdays, Thursdays &amp; Fridays Before 5:00 p.m.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Louise Marshall Hospital</b> 630 Dublin St, Mount Forest, ON N0G 2L3</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monday to Friday Before 2:15 p.m.</li> <li>Saturday to Sunday Before to 5:00 p.m.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Fergus Assessment Centre</b> 235 Union St E, Fergus, ON N1M 1M3</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monday to Sunday Before 6:00 p.m.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Groves Community Hospital</b> 131 Frederick Campbell St, Fergus, ON N1M 0H3</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monday to Sunday Before 6:15 p.m.</li> </ul>

## References

1. Ministry of Health. COVID-19 Guidance: Primary Care Providers in a Community Setting – Version 8.0. 28-Jul-21. Available from: [https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/2019\\_primary\\_care\\_guidance.pdf](https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/2019_primary_care_guidance.pdf)
2. Public Health Ontario. Completing the COVID-19 Virus Test Requisition. Available from: <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/lab/completing-covid-19-test-requisition.pdf>
3. Public Health Ontario. Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)- PCR. Last updated 30-Apr-21. Available from: <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/laboratory-services/test-informationindex/covid-19>