

October 15, 2021

COVID-19 Testing Overview for Family Physicians

- See Ministry of Health guidance on testing [here](#). In general:
 - **Symptomatic:** those with at least one [symptom or sign](#) should be considered for molecular testing. Use clinical judgment when symptom is evident of a different diagnosis (e.g., COPD exacerbation).
 - **Asymptomatic:** individuals with a **positive** ‘antigen point-of-care’ or ‘self-test’ result, and those from targeted groups (e.g., contacts of confirmed positive cases, part of an outbreak investigation, etc.) are among those who should receive molecular testing.
- If you wish to conduct in-office/clinic COVID testing or support community efforts, reach out to your Ontario Health [Regional Testing Lead](#).
 - In-office/clinic testing can be performed if you are able to follow droplet and contact precautions, have the relevant testing info and tools, and can ensure sample delivery to a lab doing COVID testing (where required).
 - Here are links to a [list of testing and assessment centres](#) and [PHO’s testing resources page](#), with information about specimen collection and ordering test kits.
 - Here is the [Swab Kit and Rapid Test: Intake Form](#).

Test Type	Molecular laboratory-based testing	Molecular point-of-care testing	Antigen point-of-care testing	Self-testing (molecular or antigen)
	For a summary of test types, see, section #4 here			
Also known as	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test • Nucleic acid amplification test (NAAT) • Molecular test • Genetic test 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LAMP (loop-mediated isothermal amplification) test • Rapid molecular test (RMT) • Examples: ID NOW™, GeneXpert® 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rapid antigen test (RAT) • Lateral flow immunoassay (LFIA) • Examples: Abbott Panbio™, BD Veritor™, Quidel Sofia™, BTNX Rapid Response™ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home tests • Over-the-counter tests • Direct-to-consumer tests • Examples: Lucira “Check It” COVID-19 Test Kit, Cue COVID-19, Ellume COVID-19 Home Test, Quidel QuickVue

Uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diagnostic purposes (primarily) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diagnostic OR screening purposes Note: Instruments often have lower sensitivity than lab tests but increased accessibility and rapidity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Screening purposes ONLY Note: Can be used for repeated screening (e.g., ongoing screening of staff) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Screening purposes ONLY Note: See page 2 of MOH Point-of-Care/Self-Testing Guidance
In-office use?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes (specimen collection only) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes Use ID NOW™ to test symptomatic and asymptomatic (high-risk contacts) Must be able to report results through the provincial portal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes Not currently recommended for one-off testing of patients 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A
How to access tests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Order swab kits via the Ontario Health Digital Health Services page 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact covid19testing@ontariohealth.ca Ontario Health can provide onboarding documentation, training and ongoing support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Available through the Provincial Rapid Antigen Screening Program See Get free rapid tests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purchase over the counter at participating pharmacies, stores and online retailers (availability varies)
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PHO evidence brief: The Use of Alternate Specimen Collection Methods for COVID-19 PCR Testing See resources in next column 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PHO: PCR Preferred Specimen Collection Methods NEJM Procedure: Collection of Nasopharyngeal Specimens with the Swab Technique (video) PHO step-by-step instructions: Combined Oral Buccal + Nasal Specimen Collection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See above 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Testing Yourself for COVID-19 factsheet (PHO)

Serology

COVID-19 antibody (serological) tests are not conclusive for protective immunity nor to rule out infection. As noted by PHO, currently, the limited clinical value for individual patient testing precludes the widespread use of COVID serology as a clinical diagnostic tool.

Helpful reference document developed by a group of Ontario physicians and scientists [here](#).