

GUIDANCE FOR EMPLOYER-INITIATED COVID-19 TESTING

Overview

Employer-initiated COVID-19 testing includes all COVID-19 testing requested and/or paid for by an employer for their employees, contractors, or clients. This document has been developed to outline the parameters and guidelines for conducting these tests.

COVID-19 Testing Parameters and Risk Mitigations

<p>Key Terms</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Molecular test: Molecular tests detect the virus’ genetic material. Public health labs in Canada and around the world use lab-based molecular testing, also known as polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing, to diagnose COVID-19 infection. Lab-based molecular testing is the gold standard for diagnosing active COVID-19 infection in patients with symptoms. Rapid molecular tests deliver results faster than lab-based molecular tests but are typically less sensitive than lab-based tests. • Antigen test: Antigen-based tests, which are a type of rapid point-of-care test, detect specific proteins on the surface of the virus. They are generally less accurate than lab-based PCR tests, and therefore can produce false-positive and false-negative results. Antigen tests are licensed for use in Canada for people with symptoms, but can be used for screening (see below) in people without symptoms. • Serology test: Serological tests do not detect the virus itself. Instead, they detect the antibodies produced in response to an infection. At this time, no antibody test can confirm or prove immunity to COVID-19 and these tests are not appropriate for diagnosing COVID-19. • Diagnostic test: Lab-based molecular tests are used to diagnose COVID-19. When used in symptomatic individuals, positive results from rapid tests are considered to be reliable for diagnosing COVID-19 infection. • Screening test: A screening test is done to detect potential health diseases in people who do not have any symptoms of disease (i.e. they are asymptomatic). When a rapid test is used in people without symptoms, it is a screening test, not a diagnostic test.
<p>Required Parameters</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employers should not use testing devices that have not been approved by Health Canada, as results cannot be meaningfully interpreted. • All employer-initiated COVID-19 testing must follow the processes and procedures outlined in the attached employer-initiated COVID-19 Testing and Reporting Quick Reference Card. • Positive COVID-19 diagnostic test results must be reported according to the procedures outlined in the Quick Reference Cards. • Negative COVID-19 diagnostic test results must be made available at the specific request of the Chief Medical Officer of Health or the Zone Medical Officer of Health. • Employer-initiated COVID-19 testing does not remove the obligation of employers to abide by the public orders issued by the Alberta Chief Medical Officer of Health, as well as adhere to industry-specific guidance posted on Biz Connect. • Personal and health information must be collected, used, disclosed, and protected by any applicable privacy laws, including <i>the Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA)</i>, the <i>Health Information Act (HIA)</i>, and the <i>Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP)</i>.

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<p>Guidelines for Companies Administering/ Seeking Testing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All testing must be performed using Health Canada-approved testing devices and/or laboratory tests administered by accredited diagnostic laboratories. This applies to molecular tests, such as LAMP, and antigen tests. Tests must be used in compliance with testing guidelines issued by Health Canada and the Chief Medical Officer of Health. • Companies will be responsible for all costs related to enhanced and expanded testing they initiate, and ensuring test administrators are trained to administer tests as per the manufacturer’s guidelines. • Companies using point-of-care/rapid COVID-19 tests must follow the relevant procedures outlined in the Quick Reference Cards. Eligible symptoms for symptomatic testing are available on the Government of Alberta website. • It is preferred that symptomatic workers be directed to seek testing through the public system, unless there are logistical or significant other challenges. It is recommended that symptomatic workers not be tested through rapid testing outside Alberta Health Services unless absolutely necessary. • Employers should seek legal advice on issues of human rights, labour and employment law, privacy, health information, and occupational health and safety before implementing a testing program. Based on this advice, employers should develop a company policy related to COVID-19 testing. • It is recommended that companies assess their need for liability insurance in case of illness or injury to an employee, contractor, or client related to the testing program.
<p>Guidelines for Laboratories Providing Testing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laboratories contracted to perform tests on individuals working in Alberta must abide by the Government of Alberta’s conditions, including adherence to these guidelines and the relevant procedures outlined in the Quick Reference Cards. • Laboratories used to conduct diagnostic testing in Alberta must be accredited by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta or the equivalent in the jurisdiction in which the laboratory is located. • All testing must be performed on Health Canada-approved testing devices and should be used in compliance with testing guidelines issued by the Chief Medical Officer of Health • Labs should provide employers with guidance for interpretation and application of COVID-19 test results that aligns with provincial public health guidelines.
<p>References</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The FOIP-PIPA Help Desk can answer questions and provide information related to a private sector organization’s obligations under PIPA. The FOIP-PIPA Help Desk can be reached at 780-427-5848 or SA.AccessAndPrivacy@gov.ab.ca. • For general information about the HIA, the HIA Help Desk can be contacted by phone at 780-427-8089 or by email at HiaHelpDesk@gov.ab.ca.
<p>Attachment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employer-Initiated COVID-19 Testing and Reporting Quick Reference Cards, including process for reporting results for point-of-care or lab-based testing (Appendix A), minimum data set required for positive results reporting (Appendix B), and sample letters that organizations can use to follow up with clients (Appendices C, D, & E).

Reference Card Scenario Overview:

The following quick reference card highlights guidance, actions, and reporting requirements for testing in four distinct testing scenarios.

Scenario #1 – Health Canada-approved rapid/Point-of-Care (POC) testing that is administered in symptomatic individuals (see quick reference card page 2).

Scenario #2 – Health Canada-approved rapid/POC screening that is administered in asymptomatic individuals (see quick reference card page 3).

Scenario #3 – Asymptomatic or symptomatic testing performed by an accredited diagnostic laboratory (see quick reference card page 4).

Scenario #4 – Serology testing (see quick reference card page 5).

Scenario #1: Rapid/POC testing – Symptomatic

If a test is completed on a Health Canada-approved testing platform under the conditions outlined by Health Canada and in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions, a positive test result on a test administered to a symptomatic individual (symptom duration less than 7 days) is reliable and does not require confirmatory testing. No additional testing through the public testing system is required.

Rapid/POC test result	
Positive	Negative
Advice	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Symptomatic individuals should be directed to seek testing through the public system, unless there are logistical or significant other challenges. • No confirmatory testing is required if the test is Health Canada-approved and the individual is symptomatic (and symptoms started within the previous 7 days). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rapid/POC tests tend to have a lower sensitivity than PCR tests, and therefore a negative rapid test result cannot rule out infection. • Close contacts of known cases or individuals who have been exposed to a known outbreak should get a PCR test performed through the public testing system. • Book online or call 811 to book an appointment.
Actions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An individual with a positive result must immediately isolate. • Isolation period is for 10 days from the start of symptoms, or until symptoms resolve, whichever takes longer. • Positive cases are asked to access the COVID-19 Close Contact Tool and submit the requested information or initiate contact follow-up as per routine processes for the worksite. • Based on the test result, employers should advise the case to isolate as per public health guidance. Close contacts of a confirmed positive case must continue to quarantine for 14 days from the last exposure and monitor for symptoms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand that this is a point-in-time result. It does not guarantee that the individual is not infected with COVID-19 or will not spread it to others. • Symptomatic individuals or those who develop symptoms should follow public health guidance, even if the test result was negative. • Continue to follow public health guidance including physical distancing, masking, hand hygiene, cleaning & disinfection, and isolating when ill. • A negative result does not change isolation and quarantine requirements. Individuals should ensure public health orders are followed.
Reporting requirements	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive results must be reported to the Chief Medical Officer of Health and Alberta Health Services as outlined in Appendix A. • The minimum data requirements for reporting positive tests are outlined in Appendix B. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No reporting necessary. • Negative COVID-19 diagnostic test results must be made available at the specific request of the Chief Medical Officer of Health or the Zone Medical Officer of Health.

Scenario #2: Rapid/POC screening – Asymptomatic

A positive result on a test administered to an asymptomatic individual is not reliable and requires confirmatory testing through the public testing system. Rapid/POC tests in this scenario must be approved for COVID-19 screening in asymptomatic individuals.

Rapid/POC screening result	
Positive	Negative
Advice	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A confirmatory test through the public testing system is required. Based on the POC result, employers should advise the case to isolate until public laboratory confirmatory results are available, and can advise close workplace contacts to quarantine and monitor for symptoms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rapid/POC tests tend to have a lower sensitivity than PCR tests, and therefore a negative rapid test result cannot rule out infection. Close contacts of known cases or individuals who have been exposed to a known outbreak should get a PCR test performed through the public testing system. Call 811 to book an appointment.
Actions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual should call 811 to schedule a public system test and inform 811 staff of positive rapid/POC test result. Public health guidance for isolation must be followed at least until public laboratory confirmatory test results are available. If the public PCR test result is negative, the individual and close contacts can return back to work if they are asymptomatic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand that this is a point-in-time result. It does not guarantee that the individual is not infected with COVID-19 or will not spread it to others. Symptomatic individuals or individuals who develop symptoms should follow public health guidance, even if the test result was negative. Continue to follow public health guidance including physical distancing, masking, hand hygiene, cleaning & disinfection, and isolating when ill. A negative result does not change isolation and quarantine requirements. Individuals should ensure public health orders are followed.
Reporting requirements	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The public testing system will report results as required based on a confirmed positive test result. Individuals who test positive on the confirmatory test will be contacted through existing public testing system processes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No reporting necessary. Negative COVID-19 diagnostic test results must be made available at the specific request of the Chief Medical Officer of Health or the Zone Medical Officer of Health.

Scenario #3: Accredited Diagnostic Laboratory Testing

Samples collected at a workplace/POC site are sent to an accredited diagnostic laboratory (e.g., DynaLife) for testing. Tests in this scenario must be approved for asymptomatic screening if performed on asymptomatic individuals.

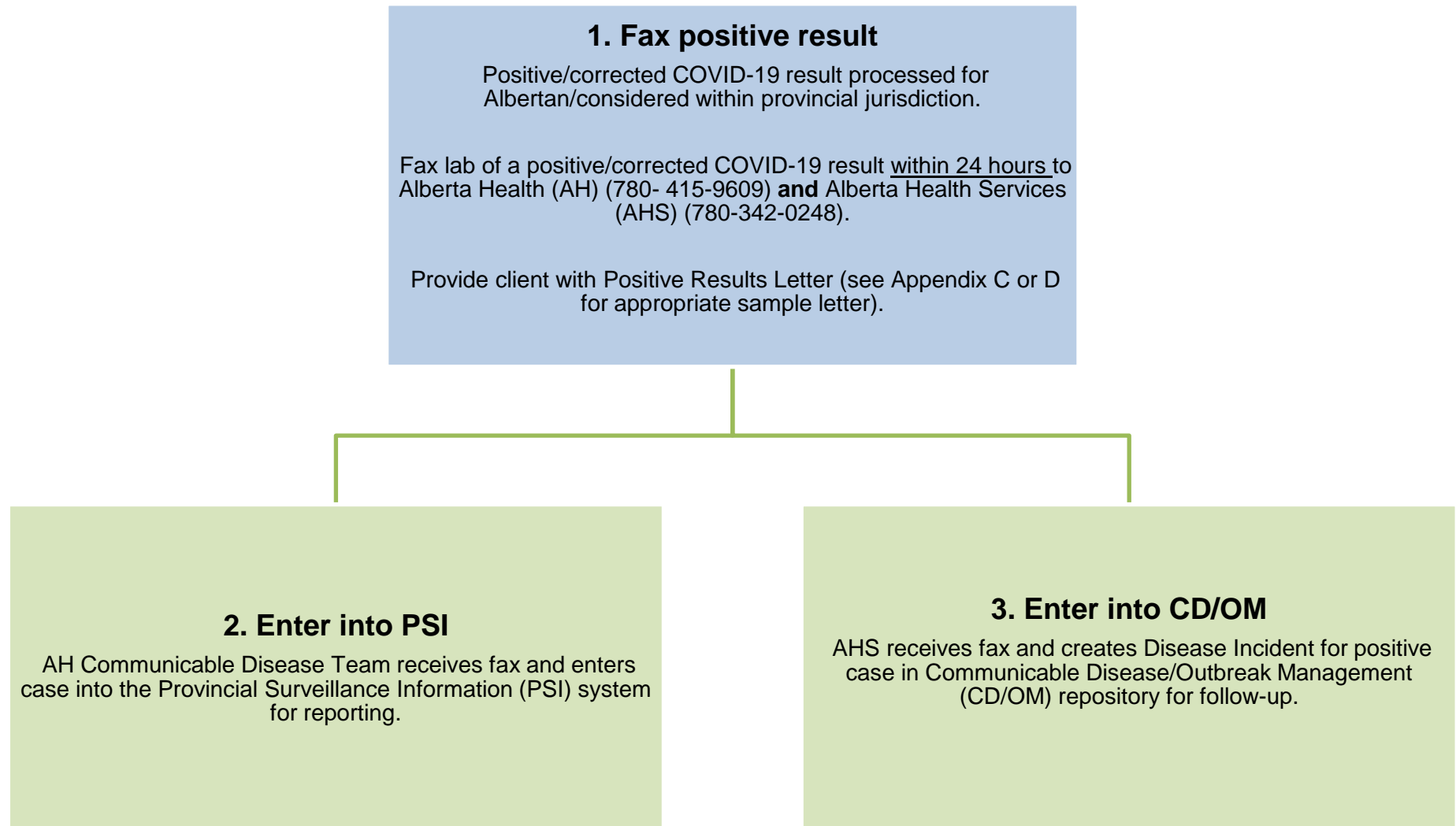
Accredited Laboratory Test Result	
Positive	Negative
Advice	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No confirmatory testing is required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand that this is a point-in-time result. It does not guarantee that the individual is not infected with COVID-19 or will not be able to spread it to others. Symptomatic individuals or those who develop symptoms should follow public health guidance, even if the test result was negative.
Actions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An individual with a positive result must immediately isolate. Isolation period is for 10 days from the start of symptoms, or until symptoms resolve, whichever takes longer. Positive cases are asked to access the COVID-19 Close Contact Tool and submit the requested information or initiate contact follow-up as per routine processes for the worksite. Based on the test result, employers should advise the case to isolate as per public health guidance. Close contacts of a confirmed positive case must continue to quarantine for 14 days from the last exposure and monitor for symptoms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to follow public health guidance including physical distancing, masking, hand hygiene, cleaning & disinfection, and isolating when ill. If an individual is a close contact of a confirmed positive case, they must continue to quarantine for 14 days from the time of last exposure and monitor for symptoms.
Reporting requirements	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Labs that have reporting systems linked to the public system will directly report a positive result. Labs without a direct reporting system must report positive results to the Chief Medical Officer of Health and Alberta Health Services as outlined in Appendix A. The minimum data requirements for reporting positive tests are outlined in Appendix B. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No reporting necessary. Reporting of negative COVID-19 diagnostic test results is at the discretion of the Chief Medical Officer of Health or the Zone Medical Officer of Health.

Scenario #4: Serology Testing

A serology test may be performed using a rapid/POC test or by an accredited laboratory.

Serology test result	
Positive	Negative
Advice	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A positive result on a COVID-19 serology test does not guarantee that an individual is protected from further infection. Companies should not use the results of an antibody test to inform work assignments or otherwise manage employee activities, based on an individual testing positive for antibodies on a serology test unless the test has been approved by Health Canada for confirming protective immunity to COVID-19. At this time, no antibody test has been approved to confirm protection from COVID-19. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No reporting necessary. Companies should not use the results of an antibody test to inform work assignments or otherwise manage employee activities, based on an individual testing positive for antibodies on a serology test unless the test has been approved by Health Canada for confirming protective immunity to COVID-19. At this time, no antibody test has been approved to confirm protection from COVID-19.
Actions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public health guidance such as physical distancing, masking, hand hygiene, daily symptom screening, staying home when sick, should be maintained regardless of a positive serology test result. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public health guidance such as physical distancing, masking, hand hygiene, daily symptom screening, staying home when sick, should be maintained regardless of the negative serology test result.
Reporting requirements	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No reporting necessary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No reporting necessary.

**Positive results reporting for Rapid/POC testing and laboratories without links to the public system
(Scenario #1 - quick reference card page 2)**



Minimum data set required for positive results reporting

*Mandatory Field

Client Demographics:	Comments
ULI - AB Unique lifetime identifier or Other Identifier (e.g., Medical Record Number) *	ULI preferred if available
Client Last Name*	
Client First Name*	
Client Date of Birth*	
Client Gender*	
Client Street Address*	
Client Municipality*	
Client Province*	
Client Country*	
Client Postal Code*	
Client Phone number*	
Client asymptomatic?* (Y/N)	
Isolating/quarantining in Alberta?* (Y/N)	If yes, provide local address in AB if different from above
Lab Chart Details:	
Submitting Lab Name*	For POC tests, the responsible organization and individual should be identified here.
Lab Phone Number	
Lab Accession Number*	
Specimen Collection Date and Time*	Note: Date and Time preferred
Specimen Arrival (at lab) Date and Time	Note: Date and Time preferred
Specimen Results Available Date and Time	Note: Date and Time preferred
Specimen Source or Type*	
Type of Test	e.g. What platform
Lab Test or Test Ordered*	e.g. COVID-19
Result of Test*	e.g. Positive, Detected, etc.
Outbreak EI Number*	If available (e.g. 2020-123 or 2020-EDM-123)

Appendix B – Positive Result Reporting

Employer Name*	If not available as a separate field, please indicate in Order Comments
Employer Medical Lead Phone Number	If not available as a separate field, please indicate in Order Comments
Facility Site Name and Address	If not available as a separate field, please indicate in Order Comments
Order Comments (if applicable)	

Appendix C – Scenario #1 Sample Letter for Symptomatic Individuals Testing Positive

«Date_Letter_Generated»

«AddressBlock»

Dear «First_Name»:

This letter is in follow up to your recent **Point-of-Care/Rapid Test** for COVID-19 done at «Name_of_ Site» while you had symptoms.

Your COVID-19 test of «Date_of_Test» was positive for COVID-19 and is considered a confirmed positive. This positive result will be forwarded to Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services.

You are legally required to isolate for a minimum of 10 days from when your symptoms started, or until you no longer have symptoms, whichever is longer. Information on isolation requirements in Alberta can be found at alberta.ca/isolation.

Positive cases are asked to access the [COVID-19 Close Contact Tool](#) and submit the requested information to support provincial contact tracing efforts or initiate contact follow-up as per routine processes for the worksite.

For more information on COVID-19, please visit alberta.ca/covid.

Sincerely,

«First_Name_Last_Name» «Designation»
«Name_of_Site»

«Date_Letter_Generated»

«AddressBlock»

Dear «First_Name»:

This letter is in follow up to your recent **Point-of-Care/Rapid Test** for COVID-19 done at «Name_of_Site».

Your COVID-19 test of «Date_of_Test» was positive for COVID-19. **These results are considered preliminary** and require further confirmatory testing through a public health lab. Please arrange for an additional COVID-19 test through Alberta Health Services. Appointments can be booked by calling 811.

Because of this preliminary positive result, you should isolate until you are tested through a public health lab, and receive your results.

Any person with cough, fever, shortness of breath, runny nose, or sore throat that is not related to a pre-existing illness or health condition is legally required to isolate for a minimum of 10 days from the start of symptoms, or until symptoms resolve, whichever is longer.

Information on isolation requirements in Alberta can be found at alberta.ca/isolation.

For more information on COVID-19, please visit alberta.ca/covid.

Sincerely,

«First_Name_Last_Name» «Designation»
«Name_of_Site»

«Date_Letter_Generated»

«AddressBlock»

Dear «First_Name»:

This letter is in follow up to your recent test for COVID-19 done by «Name_of_Private_Lab».

Your COVID-19 test of «Date_of_Test» was positive for COVID-19. This result will be *«available in the public lab system through direct reporting from the lab or forwarded»* to Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services.

You are legally required to isolate for a minimum of 10 days from when your symptoms started, or until you no longer have symptoms, whichever is longer. Information on isolation requirements in Alberta can be found at alberta.ca/isolation.

Positive cases are asked to access the [COVID-19 Close Contact Tool](#) and submit the requested information to support provincial contact tracing efforts or initiate contact follow-up as per routine processes for the worksite.

For more information on COVID-19, please visit alberta.ca/covid.

Sincerely,

«First_Name_Last_Name» «Designation»
«Name_of_Site or OHS Service»