

# Information for Owners/Operators/Managers about Testing of Asymptomatic Residents and Staff in LTC or SL4/4D Sites

As you are aware, we are now recommending swabbing asymptomatic residents and staff in all Long Term Care (LTC) and SL4/4D sites for COVID-19 who have not had an outbreak. We have previously been swabbing residents and staff in sites once there is a confirmed COVID-19 outbreak (one or more positive residents or staff) on a work unit. This is now being extended to non-outbreak LTC and SL4/4D sites. The intent is to assist with a better understanding of COVID-19 in these settings, and to potentially identify individuals who may be asymptomatic or in the pre-symptomatic phase of COVID-19 in order to further limit spread of this infection.

If a positive swab is obtained from a resident, appropriate isolation and use of full Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is required in providing care for these individuals.

We are asking for your assistance to facilitate swabbing of all asymptomatic residents who live in LTC or DSL4/4D in your facility. Staff will generally follow processes for their zone for swabbing; “staff” is inclusive of any workers at the site. **This is a fully voluntary process.**

## Consent

Consent for asymptomatic swabbing is required for both residents and staff. The consent for residents may be written or verbal; if verbal, it requires documentation in the chart. Recognizing that residents may have an alternate decision maker, consent may need to be obtained from that decision-maker prior to the swabbing commencing at a site. Consent may be obtained by the person taking the swab. Consent for staff will be obtained at the time they present for swabbing.

## Process

### 1. Obtaining swabs for use

Swabs may be obtained through usual channels. Two swab types are available including throat swabs and Nasopharyngeal (NP) swabs. Recommendations are to use throat swabs for most individuals and NP swabs for individuals where throat swabs would be difficult to obtain (e.g. some cognitively impaired clients/residents, others). We recommend ordering sufficient of the NP swabs for these individuals but note that NP swabs are more limited than throat swabs so we encourage that you not over-order. The swabs are ordered as follows:

#### For Calgary and Edmonton Zones:

LTC and SL4/4D sites can request their supplies by completing the form found at the below link and faxing it in to the number on the top of the form as appropriate. Sites must provide the facility name on the form, clear details of their location, making sure to indicate they are a congregate living facility, and the quantity of swabs and medium on hand.

<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/wf/plab/wf-provlab-specimen-collection-kit-order-form.pdf>

**For North, Central and South Zones:**

Follow routine established processes for requesting specimen collection supplies. Otherwise contact your local Alberta Precision Laboratory.

This information is also being posted on Continuing Care Connections.

**2. Process to identify and track swabs as being from asymptomatic individuals at a LTC or DSL4/4D site**

As per current Zone processes, swabs collected will need to be submitted with the appropriate Provincial Public Health Laboratories requisition form. The most current version of the requisition can be downloaded and printed at each site:

- 21598 [COVID-19 Test Requisition \(North Zone\)](#)
- 21597 [COVID-19 Test Requisition \(Edmonton Zone\)](#)
- 21600 [COVID-19 Test Requisition \(Central Zone\)](#)
- 21596 [COVID-19 Test Requisition \(Calgary Zone\)](#)
- 21599 [COVID-19 Test Requisition \(South Zone\)](#)

The Provincial Public Health Laboratories requisition form has been modified to include checkboxes for *Asymptomatic* and *Symptomatic* in the ‘Reason for Testing’ section of the form. A check needs to be placed in one of these checkboxes.

**Provide Clinical History or Reason for Testing below - Testin**

**Reason for Testing**

Investigation for COVID-19 exposure

**Check ONE:**     Symptomatic     Asymptomatic

You must identify if the person being swabbed is immunocompromised or not. Select the appropriate box. If yes is selected, provide details:

Immunocompromised  
 No     Yes (details) \_\_\_\_\_

In the ‘Health Care Worker?’ section, the ‘Yes’ checkbox needs to be checked for all asymptomatic and symptomatic staff who are swabbed. If the person being swabbed is a resident, the No checkbox needs to be checked for all asymptomatic and symptomatic residents.

Health Care Worker?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No		
Health Care Worker or Resident of LTC/DSL Facility?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	If yes, specify:	Full Facility Name
Location Code <b>Required</b>	_____		Location Code	
<small>(see reverse for list of Codes)</small>				
City or Town	_____			

You must identify specifically at which site the person being swabbed works or resides. There are three fields to assist you in identifying this information on the revised requisition:

**Full Facility Name:** Enter the full name of the facility, e.g., **Summerwood Village Retirement Residence**

**Location Code:** Enter the exact location code assigned to this facility. The full list of LTC/DSL codes in each zone is located on the back of the requisition (or on page two of the electronic version of the requisition), e.g., **SWP SVRR** (note: Ensure there is a space between the 3-digit city/town and the code for the facility/site name). **IF** the location code is not listed on the requisition, enter **NOT FOUND ON LIST**.

**City or Town:** This is a free text field and is intended to be used for quality control, to verify that the correct location code was used on the requisition. E.g., Sherwood Park. This will ensure that if an incorrect location code is used, the correct location can be identified at time of processing the specimen.

The links provided above are zone-specific and contain the full list of sites for each zone.

Site specific non-nominal testing-result reports will be sent to site the owner/operator/manager within 96 hours of reporting of the positive COVID-19 result for the index case.

### 3. Personnel for swabbing

There is no limitation by scope of practice as to which professionals can use which swabs. RN's, LPN's and physicians can use either NP or throat swabs. In addition, some Allied Health professionals are able to assist with swabbing under their scope of practice. It is encouraged that sites provide onsite swabbing through existing personnel on site. If that is not possible, please contact Zone Seniors Health to arrange for swabbing to be done.

#### Staff Swabbing

Staff will need to be advised:

- To complete the [online assessment](#) through the AHS website at [ahs.ca/covid](https://ahs.ca/covid). This tool will provide staff with directions on how to be tested.
- To identify when they complete the [online assessment](#) that they are an asymptomatic health care worker.
- Staff will need to be advised of the site code *prior to being tested*, and asked to provide the code to the healthcare professional doing the testing so that it can be documented on the requisition. The following links provide the zone-specific requisitions, which include all of the site codes for each zone:
  - 21596 [COVID-19 Test Requisition \(Calgary Zone\)](#)
  - 21597 [COVID-19 Test Requisition \(Edmonton Zone\)](#)
  - 21598 [COVID-19 Test Requisition \(North Zone\)](#)
  - 21599 [COVID-19 Test Requisition \(South Zone\)](#)
  - 21600 [COVID-19 Test Requisition \(Central Zone\)](#)
- Asymptomatic staff DO NOT need to self-isolate while awaiting testing and results.

- Remind staff that if, at any time, they develop symptoms suggestive of COVID-19, they should not come to work, need to notify their manager, and need to complete the [online assessment](#). [They](#) will be contacted by Public Health with further instructions.
- If they provided consent they will be informed of a negative result through the established auto-dialer process, otherwise they will receive that result via a phone call from 811 Health Link.
- Public Health case investigators will be calling them directly if the result is positive.

**Please note:** Staff must understand what it means if their COVID-19 test is positive. If the test result is positive a Public Health case investigator will contact them directly to discuss their result and provide further instructions regarding isolation. By law, they must self-isolate for at least 10 days after the test, even if they do not have any symptoms. Additionally, health care workers cannot work in a health care setting until 14 days from the date of laboratory specimen collection. If the staff member gets any symptoms, they must stay in self-isolation for 10 days after their symptoms appear. Anyone who has been in close contact with them must also, by law, self-isolate for at least 14 days and watch for symptoms. Very rarely, the COVID-19 test is falsely positive. There is no way to tell if a false positive result is wrong.