

DATE:	23 June 2025
TO:	All Healthcare Providers
FROM:	Provincial Public Health Laboratory, Alberta Precision Laboratories
RE:	Discontinuation of routine cutaneous <i>C. diphtheriae</i> toxin testing

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Key Message

- Effective June 23, 2025, *C. diphtheriae* isolates from **non-respiratory** samples will no longer be tested for diphtheria toxin.

Background

- In Alberta, *C. diphtheriae* is most commonly isolated from cutaneous wounds, often in polymicrobial infections with organisms such as Group A Streptococcus (GAS) and *S. aureus*. These typically present as chronic, non-healing ulcers.
- Historically, all isolates of *C. diphtheriae* in Alberta were sent for toxin testing. However, the **Alberta Notifiable Disease Guidelines for Diphtheria** were updated in April 2025. The revised guidelines state:

“Due to the limitation of NAT results in identifying toxin-producing *C. diphtheriae*... and the lack of evidence of toxigenic *C. diphtheriae* strains in Alberta in over a decade, ***C. diphtheriae* isolates from non-respiratory sources will not undergo additional NAT testing unless specifically requested** by the most responsible practitioner (MRP) and/or Zone Medical Officer of Health (MOH) in consultation with the MOC at APL.”

Action Required

- If toxin-producing diphtheria is clinically suspected and toxin testing is necessary, consult the Public Health Laboratory (ProvLab) Microbiologist On-Call (MOC) within 7 days of *C. diphtheriae* being identified.

Questions/Concerns

- Greg Tyrrell, Program Lead for Diphtheria Testing, Provincial Public Health Laboratory, APL

Approved by

- Graham Tipples, Medical/Scientific Director, Provincial Public Health Laboratory, APL

References

- **Alberta Public Health Disease Management Guidelines, Diphtheria. Available online:**
<https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/75f0d4df-d687-4be6-9b83-e808f39e9fd6/resource/b48f5077-c140-4688-bfb2-699ad2d42b73/download/hlth-phdmg-diphtheria-2025-04.pdf>