

DATE:	11 May 2026
TO:	All Physicians and Healthcare Providers
FROM:	Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL) – Public Health Laboratory
RE:	Replacement of SAC HIV PLASMA VIRAL LOAD Orderable

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Key Message

- Effective 26 May 2026, the **SAC HIV PLASMA VIRAL LOAD (SAC HIV VL)** Connect Care order will be removed. Replacing the order will be the **HIV 1 NAT** order.
- Effective 26 May 2026, ordering providers should ensure **HIV-1 NAT** is used instead of **SAC HIV VL**.
- If you have saved the **SAC HIV VL** order on a personalized preference list, your order will automatically be replaced with **HIV-1 NAT**. Users do not need to make the substitution themselves.
- HIV Viral Load testing will continue to be performed on the Hologic Panther Aptima Quant Assay at the Public Health Laboratory sites in Edmonton and Calgary.
- **SAC HIV VL** orders that are pending, but have not yet been collected, do not need to be re-ordered. They will automatically convert to **HIV-1 NAT** upon collection.
- Other SAC specific orders, such as SAC HIV Drug Resistance Testing, will remain status quo.

Background

- **SAC HIV VL** and **HIV-1 NAT** are for viral load monitoring in patients previously diagnosed with HIV.
- Two orders for HIV viral load were previously created to account for differences in testing locations:
 - **SAC HIV PLASMA VIRAL LOAD**: Used for testing HIV viral load among patients registered with the Southern Alberta Clinic (SAC). Testing was performed at the Calgary Diagnostic Scientific Centre (DSC).
 - **HIV 1 NAT**: Used for testing HIV viral loads for patients not registered with SAC. Testing performed at the Public Health Laboratory in Edmonton (PLNA).
- On Oct 28, 2025, **SAC HIV PLASMA VIRAL LOAD** testing was transitioned from the DSC to the Public Health Laboratory in Calgary (PLSA).
- There is no longer a need for two separate Connect Care (Epic) orders now that all HIV-1 viral load testing is conducted at the Public Health Laboratory sites in Calgary and Edmonton.

Questions/Concerns

- Dr. William Stokes, Medical Microbiologist – Public Health Microbiology (william.stokes@albertaprecisionlabs.ca)
- Dr. Kevin Fonseca, Clinical Virologist, APL - Public Health Microbiology (kevin.fonseca@albertaprecisionlabs.ca)
- Dr. Byron Berenger, Medical Microbiologist and Provincial Microbiology Section Chief, APL

Approved by

- Dr. Graham Tipples, Medical-Scientific Director, Public Health, APL