

DATE:	4 August 2026
TO:	All Physicians and Clinicians
FROM:	Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL) – Public Health Laboratory
RE:	Poliovirus and Pertussis Serologies for Immune Verification

PLEASE POST OR DISTRIBUTE AS WIDELY AS APPROPRIATE

Key Message

- Routine serological testing to assess immunity to poliovirus or pertussis (*Bordetella pertussis*) is not offered as it is not recommended for this purpose.
- Requests for routine serological assessment of poliovirus and pertussis immunity will be cancelled. When valid immunization records are unavailable, patients should initiate or complete an age- and risk-appropriate immunization schedule.
- Clinicians who suspect acute poliovirus infection should immediately consult the on-call microbiologist/virologist at the Alberta Precision Laboratories Public Health Laboratory.

Background

- The Public Health Laboratory (Alberta Precision Laboratories) has been receiving high volumes of serology testing requests for both poliovirus (1) and pertussis (*Bordetella pertussis*). Between December 2025 and June 2026, the laboratory received more than 250 requests for each test. Routine serology testing to assess immunity to poliovirus or pertussis is not offered because it is not recommended for this purpose. As per the Canadian Immunization Guide (2), serology for either pathogen is not recommended pre- or post-immunization.
- All requests for routine serological assessment of poliovirus or pertussis immunity will be cancelled.
- According to the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI), an individual's immunization status should be assessed using documented receipt of vaccines recommended for their age and risk group (2). Laboratory testing in this situation cannot be used as a substitute for valid immunization records.
- If immunization records for poliovirus or pertussis are unavailable, the recommended approach is to provide age- and risk-appropriate re-vaccination (2-4).
- Suspected acute poliovirus infection, particularly acute flaccid paralysis, requires immediate consultation with the on-call microbiologist/virologist at the Public Health Laboratory. Poliovirus serology is not a routine diagnostic test and may be considered only in exceptional circumstances.

Actions Required

- Do not order poliovirus or pertussis serology for routine immunity verification purposes.
- Review available immunization records to determine whether the patient is up to date. If records are unavailable or incomplete, direct the patient to Primary Care Alberta [immunization and vaccines](#) services (5). Immunization appointments can be booked at: <https://myhealth.alberta.ca/topic/immunization/pages/book-appointment.aspx?tab=5>.



Relevant References

1. Rosen et al. When re-vaccination is recommended: An evaluation of non-guideline poliovirus serology testing in Alberta, Canada. *Journal of the Association of Medical Microbiology and Infectious Disease Canada (JAMMI)* 2026; <https://doi.org/10.3138/jammi-2026-0009>.
2. National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI). Canadian Immunization Guide. Available at <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/canadian-immunization-guide.html>. See chapters specific for:
 - a. [Pertussis \(whooping cough\) vaccines](#)
 - b. [Poliomyelitis \(polio\) vaccines](#)
 - c. [Immunization of persons with inadequate immunization records](#)
3. MacDonald et al. COVID-19 and missed routine immunizations: designing for effective catch-up in Canada. *Canadian Journal of Public Health* 2020; 111:469-72; <https://doi.org/10.17269/s41997-020-00385-4>.
4. Dawson-Hahn et al. Post-arrival medical screening of newly arrived refugees, immigrants, and migrants. *CDC Yellow Book: Health Information for International Travel* (2026 Ed). Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/yellow-book/hcp/refugees-immigrants-migrants/post-arrival-medical-screening.html>.
5. Primary Care Alberta. Immunizations and vaccines. Available at <https://myhealth.alberta.ca/topic/immunization/pages/default.aspx>.

Inquiries and feedback may be directed to

- Dr. Jamil Kanji, Medical Microbiologist, Public Health Laboratory, Alberta Precision Laboratories jamil.kanji@ahs.ca.

This bulletin has been reviewed and approved by

- Dr. Graham Tipples, Medical and Scientific Director, Public Health Laboratory, Alberta Precision Laboratories