

DATE:	28 September 2026
TO:	All Health Care Providers
FROM:	Alberta Precision Laboratories
RE:	Respiratory Virus Testing for the 2026-27 Season

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Key Messages

- No changes are planned to the respiratory virus testing algorithm for the 2026-27 respiratory virus season.
- Due to rising cases of influenza, the ability to order the rapid influenza/RSV nucleic acid test (NAT) was reinstated on September 24, 2026.

Background

- Influenza A rates are rising earlier than the prior year, prompting an early reinitiation of the rapid influenza/RSV NAT for inpatients and emergency department patients.
- Despite the early occurrence of respiratory virus season, the current testing plan is sufficient to manage testing demands and clinical needs.

Action Required

- Continue to order respiratory virus testing, add-on testing, and test reinstatement requests through current pathways, which are unchanged from the prior respiratory virus season.
 - Testing can be ordered using the *Respiratory Infection (inc. COVID-19 NAT)* Connect Care order or by using the [COVID-19, Influenza and Respiratory Pathogen Panel Requisition](#).
 - Requests using other paper requisitions will continue to be cancelled.
 - Not including all the required information on the paper requisition will cause testing delays or cancellations.
 - Community patients will be tested with NATs for COVID-19 alone or COVID-19/influenza A/B depending on what is ordered and symptom status.
 - Inpatient and emergency department patients will be tested with rapid COVID-19 or rapid COVID-19/influenza A/B/RSV NATs depending on what is ordered and symptom status.
 - Regardless of patient setting, asymptomatic patients are only eligible for COVID-19 testing.
 - The Respiratory Pathogen Panel (RPP) will continue to be available for patients meeting any one of the following criteria: outbreak investigation, critical respiratory failure, severely immunocompromised, myocarditis/pericarditis, acute flaccid paralysis, child with fever not yet diagnosed after initial investigations, and pre-transplant.
 - To add-on or reinstate RPP requests on previously submitted samples, the [ProvLab Add on Test Fax](#) form and the [COVID-19, Influenza and Respiratory Pathogen Panel Requisition](#) must be completed and faxed to the lab that performed the testing. Alternatively, if testing was originally ordered through Connect Care, add-on or reinstatement requests can be performed using the add-on test options available in Connect Care.



- Continue ordering and using the universal transport medium/viral transport medium (UTM/VTM) collection kits as per current practices ([Universal/Viral Transport Medium Collection Kit Transition](#)).
- During respiratory virus season, ensure that influenza testing is requested for patients with acute respiratory illness or influenza-like illness – if only COVID-19 testing is ordered, influenza testing will not be performed.
- Do not rely solely on respiratory virus test results to determine the discontinuation of isolation precautions. Symptoms remain the primary criterion. Consult your local infection prevention and control team as needed.

Resources

- *Respiratory Infection NAT Order* tip sheet in the COVID-19 section of the Emergency, Medicine Specialties, and Critical Care Specialties CMIO Learning Home Dashboards
- *COVID-19, Influenza and Respiratory Pathogen Panel Requisition*: www.albertahealthservices.ca/frm-21701.pdf
- *ProvLab Add on Test Fax* form: <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/frm-20721.pdf>
- Additional respiratory virus test information: APL test directory ([Alberta Precision Laboratories | Lab Services](#))
- Information on UTM/VTM collection kits: [Universal/Viral Transport Medium Collection Kit Transition](#)
- Information on respiratory virus circulation, illnesses, case hospitalization, and vaccinations: [Respiratory virus dashboard | alberta.ca](#)
- If you encounter a suspect avian influenza case, refer to: [H5N1 Avian Influenza Laboratory Testing](#)
- For information on testing for measles, refer to: [Laboratory Testing for Suspected Measles](#)

Questions/Concerns

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Approved by

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