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**Date:** February 25, 2021  
**To:** All Zones  
**From:** Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL) – Public Health Laboratory and POCT  
**Re:** COVID-19 POCT with ID NOW or Panbio Availability in Assessment Centres Across Alberta

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**Key Message:**

- Effective February 14, unless otherwise specified, on-site COVID-19 Point of Care Testing (POCT) with the Abbott ID NOW or Panbio POCT Program will be available at the following Assessment Centres if not already available:
  - North Zone
    - ID NOW: Bonnyville, Fort McMurray, Grande Cache, Jasper, St Paul, Slave Lake, Peace River.
    - Panbio: Fishing Lake, Elizabeth Settlement, Kikino, Buffalo Lake, Peavine, East Prairie, Gift Lake, Paddle Prairie.
  - Edmonton Zone
    - Panbio: Edmonton Expo Centre (CIAC), Edmonton South (SIAC).
  - Central Zone
    - ID NOW: Camrose, Stettler.
    - ID NOW (date TBD): Drayton Valley, Rocky Mountain House, Vegreville, Wainwright.
  - Calgary Zone
    - ID NOW: Airdrie, Chestermere, Cochrane, Okotoks.
    - Panbio: Macleod Trail, Deerfoot, Richmond Road.
  - South Zone
    - ID NOW: Bow Island, Brooks, Fort Macleod, Milk River, Taber, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Cardston, Crowsnest Pass, Pincher Creek, Raymond, Oyen.
- Abbott ID NOW (an isothermal nucleic acid test) can be used with individuals that have COVID-19 symptoms, with best performance when onset of symptoms is within 7 days. It is also possible to use with asymptomatic individuals who are close contacts of a person testing positive for COVID-19.
  - Testing of asymptomatic close contacts is dependent on assessment centre capacity
- Panbio (an antigen-based test) can be used with individuals that have COVID-19 symptoms that have presented within the last 7 days.
  - APL continues to review and reevaluate the potential expansion of Panbio testing to other groups such as asymptomatic close contacts, but this is not yet approved.
- Two samples will be collected on all individuals (one for the ID NOW or Panbio, and the other for confirmation or surveillance testing).
- POCT results will be reported within 5-6 hours from collection. See Reference 1 for result and isolation information.
- **A negative ID NOW or Panbio test cannot be used to rule out infection.**
  - All negative ID NOW and Panbio results will be reported as "Result to follow." Samples from individuals with this result will have a sample sent for confirmation using a COVID-19 PCR. Results of the COVID-19 PCR test will be reported separately.



- Symptomatic individuals must continue to isolate as per public health guidelines.<sup>2</sup>
- Confirmatory testing for positives is not needed but a sample will be sent to the provincial laboratory for surveillance purposes.

**Action Required:**

- Individuals qualifying for testing at assessment centres continue to book appointments as per current processes.
- If an individual qualifies for ID NOW or Panbio testing, the assessment centre staff will provide instructions.
- Details on ID NOW and Panbio processes can be found in Reference 3 & 4 below.
- All individuals tested with the ID NOW and Panbio will have two swabs collected:
  1. A throat swab for ID NOW or NP swab for Panbio testing.
  2. A throat or NP swab for confirmatory COVID-19 PCR testing.
- Because of low sensitivity among individuals with symptom onset within 7 days (85% for Panbio and 90% for ID NOW), compared to our standard COVID-19 PCR testing, **negative results must currently be confirmed by a COVID-19 PCR**. APL continues to review data and perform pilot studies to see if this process can be altered in the future.

**References:**

1. AHS Information for Rapid Point of Care Testing Results:  
<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page17034.aspx>
2. AHS Information for Albertans: COVID-19:  
<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/page16997.aspx>
3. AHS Provincial POCT Abbott ID NOW for COVID-19 Program:  
<https://insite.albertahealthservices.ca/lab/Page25430.aspx>
4. AHS Provincial POCT Panbio COVID-19 Ag Rapid Test Program:  
<https://insite.albertahealthservices.ca/lab/Page25429.aspx>

**Inquiries and feedback may be directed to:**

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