

DATE:	20 March 2023
TO:	Health Care Providers at Rural Acute Care Sites and Sheldon M. Chumir Urgent Care
FROM:	Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL) – Public Health Laboratory
RE:	Discontinuation of Abbott ID NOW COVID-19 Testing for Acute Care Sites

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Key Message

- **Abbott ID NOW COVID-19 testing will be discontinued March 28, 2023.**
- **Rapid COVID-19 PCR testing is not being discontinued.**

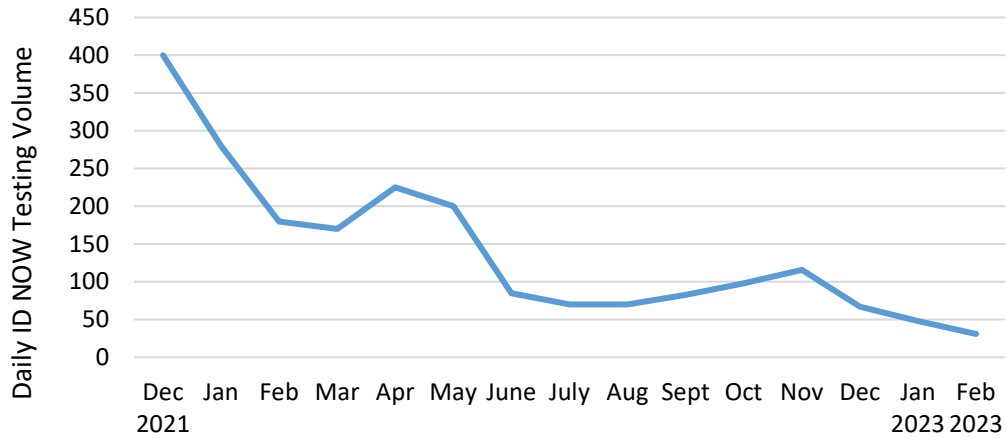
Background

- ID NOW testing was implemented at rural acute care sites that did not have on-site rapid COVID-19 PCR testing to facilitate patient management decisions in the setting of high COVID-19 prevalence and in the absence of most other respiratory viruses.
- ID NOW COVID-19 test kits, provided by the Federal government, will expire on or before March 29, 2023. Additional kits will not be provided from the government.
- Testing for other respiratory viruses is performed off-site. With the re-emergence of influenza and RSV, these other viruses often need to be tested for, in conjunction with COVID-19, to aid patient management (infection control, treatment, referrals). Therefore, the need for additional respiratory testing (e.g., influenza, RSV) minimizes much of the patient management impact of ID NOW testing.
- Negative ID NOW results are confirmed by PCR off-site, requiring the collection of two swabs, negating the quicker turnaround time advantage of on-site ID NOW testing and additional cost.
- ID NOW testing is less sensitive than other molecular/PCR testing (85-90% vs >95% for PCR).
- Testing must be performed within 1 hour of swabbing, creating logistical hurdles between ER and laboratory staff.
- COVID-19 prevalence has decreased with overall test positivity of 11-12% in Feb 2023 compared to a peak of 32%.
- ID NOW COVID-19 testing volumes in acute care sites has decreased (see Fig 1 on next page).



Figure 1: Daily ID NOW Volumes in 69 Acute Care Sites from December, 2021 to February, 2023.

Source: APL Alberta COVID-19 Rapid Testing TAT and Results Tableau Dashboard. Accessed Feb 13, 2023.



- COVID-19 and other respiratory viruses testing will continue to be performed at an APL-Public Health Laboratory or an APL acute care laboratory on alternate platforms.
- Rapid COVID-19 PCR testing will continue to be available at regional, Calgary and Edmonton sites.

Actions required

- No changes to the ordering or sample collections for COVID-19 and other respiratory viruses.

Inquiries may be directed to

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Approved By

- Dr. Carolyn O'Hara, Interim Chief Medical Laboratory Director, Alberta Precision Laboratories