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**Date:** February 12, 2021  
**To:** South, Central and North Zone Clinicians  
**From:** Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL) – Public Health Laboratory  
**Re:** New Test Criteria and Locations for Acute Care On-site ID NOW COVID-19 Testing

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**PLEASE POST OR DISTRIBUTE AS WIDELY AS APPROPRIATE**

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**Key Message:**

- This message applies to ID NOW COVID-19 testing at rural acute care sites in South, Central, and North Zone. It DOES NOT apply to assessment centres or other sites performing the ID NOW test.
- **Two changes will be in effect February 19, 2021:**
  - Expansion of test criteria to all hospital/ED patients with core/ILI and expanded COVID-19 symptoms regardless of the time since symptom onset. Previous criteria required symptom onset within 7 days of testing.
  - On-site Abbott ID NOW COVID-19 testing will be available at the following hospital centres (see appendix for sites where the test is currently available):
    - South Zone: Bassano, Bow Island, Crowsnest Pass, Fort MacLeod, Milk River, Raymond, Taber
    - Central Zone: Daysland, Hanna, Innisfail, Killam, Lacombe, Olds, Ponoka Centennial Centre for Mental Health and Brain Injury, Ponoka Hospital and Care Centre, Rimbey, Stettler, Tofield, Vermillion, Viking
    - North Zone: Athabasca, Beaverlodge, Fairview, Fox Creek, Grimshaw, Jasper, Manning, Mayerthorpe, Slave Lake, Smoky Lake, Whitecourt
- Results will be reported within an hour of receipt at the lab.
- **A negative ID NOW test cannot be used to rule out infection.** Until further notice, all negative ID NOW results will be confirmed using a COVID-19 PCR and will be reported as "Result to follow."
- Confirmatory testing for positives is not needed.
- Infection prevention & control (IPC) precautions continue to be based on symptoms and risk assessment (see *References*). **Test results should not be used to discontinue IPC precautions in symptomatic or high-risk patients.**
- Testing on the ID NOW is only available during normal laboratory operating hours. Call-back requests for ID NOW testing will not be accepted.

**Actions required**

- There is no change in the ordering and specimen collection processes (reiterated below).
- See Table 1 for the modified COVID-19 test for sites with ID NOW.
- In Mediatech, respiratory virus testing, including rapid COVID-19, should be ordered using **VIROV1**. Ensure that the ordering staff have the information (i.e. symptoms) to place the order accurately.
- If ID NOW testing is indicated (COVID-19 symptoms present), place an order for COVID-19 testing, inform the lab staff, and retrieve the ID NOW collection kit from the laboratory.



- **Collect two swabs:**
  1. An ID NOW throat swab in an empty sterile container.
  2. A standard nasopharyngeal (NP) swab in UTM: used for confirmatory testing of negative ID NOW results and other tests (ie. RPP or influenza/RSV).
- The ID NOW swab must be received in the laboratory within 30 minutes of collection.
- Results will be reported via Meditech and Netcare. Positives will also be reported by phone.
- Because of low sensitivity (estimated 85-90%) and the severe consequences of missing a positive case in acute care settings, **negative results will be sent by the laboratory for confirmation with a COVID-19 PCR.**
- If testing for COVID-19 is required on other specimens such as a bronchoalveolar lavage (BAL), endotracheal tube (ETT) aspirate, or NP aspirate, testing will be referred to the Public Health Laboratory (ProvLab) or a regional referral laboratory for COVID-19 PCR.
- Other testing for COVID-19 and other respiratory viruses will continue to be performed at ProvLab or a regional referral laboratory.

**Table 1.** COVID-19 Testing for Sites with ID NOW Available

Patient Status	Symptoms	Test(s) Available*	Testing Site**
ED/Hospitalized	COVID-19 symptoms	COVID-19 ID NOW + confirmation of negatives with a COVID-19 PCR	ID NOW: On-Site Negative Confirmation: Regional Lab
	No COVID-19 symptoms	<b>Outbreak:</b> Rapid COVID-19	Regional Lab
		<b>Other:</b> COVID-19 PCR	ProvLab
Outpatient	ILI symptoms	COVID-19 (+ influenza) NAT	ProvLab
	COVID-19 symptoms	COVID-19 PCR	ProvLab
	No COVID-19 symptoms	COVID-19 PCR	ProvLab

\*Rapid COVID-19 refers to prioritized PCR testing performed on several different COVID-19 PCR platforms used in the laboratory. It does not refer to a specific assay or point-of-care testing. Refer to the recent COVID-19 and other respiratory virus bulletins for testing of other viruses (References).

\*\*In some regions the “regional lab” means ProvLab.

**References**

- IPC COVID-19 Guidelines: <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/frm-21624.pdf>

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

- Your local consulting pathologist or microbiologist.
- General inquiries about the provincial Abbott ID NOW implementation at acute care sites can be directed to: Dr. Byron Berenger, Medical Microbiologist, APL, [Byron.Berenger@aplabs.ca](mailto:Byron.Berenger@aplabs.ca)



**Approved By:**

- Dr. Graham Tipples, Medical Scientific Director, Public Health, APL
- Dr. Michael Mengel, North Sector Medical Director, APL
- Dr. Hallgrimur Benediktsson, South Sector Medical Director, APL

**Appendix: Rural acute care sites with ID NOW testing available before February 17, 2021**

South Zone: Brooks, Cardston, Oyen, Pincher Creek

Central Zone: Camrose, Castor, Coronation, Drayton Valley, Drumheller, Provost, Rocky Mountain House, Two Hills, Wainwright, Wetaskiwin, Vegreville

North Zone: Barrhead, Bonnyville, Cold Lake, Edson, Elk Point, High Prairie, Hinton, Lac La Biche, Peace River, St. Paul, Wabasca, Westlock