

DATE:	29 April 2024
TO:	Alberta Physicians and Nurse Practitioners
FROM:	Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL)
RE:	Provincial Cerebrospinal Fluid (CSF) Collection Guidelines

PLEASE POST OR DISTRIBUTE AS WIDELY AS APPROPRIATE

Key Message

- New provincial [Cerebrospinal Fluid \(CSF\) Collection Guidelines](#) are available.
- These can also be accessed via the [Alberta Precision Laboratories Test Directory](#).
- There is also a new standardized approach for Add-Ons on “CSF Tube, Hold” samples.

Background

- CSF testing issues have previously been partially addressed as per the Lab Bulletin of 2021-11-29: [Changes to Labels for CSF Testing in Connect Care \(albertahealthservices.ca\)](#)
- More changes were piloted at the UAH in 2023, were refined and are now being deployed at all sites.

How this will impact you

- When ordering please specify the “primary reason” for testing out of the four possible options: Infective Process, Subarachnoid Hemorrhage, Malignancy or Autoimmune/inflammatory Process.
- General lab staff will distribute aliquots of CSF for testing using the same Guidelines above. More CSF volume (ml) will go to tests that align with the “primary reason” specified.
 - For example, if the “primary reason” is “Malignancy”, then more fluid will be sent for tests color coded green (“Leukemia\Lymphoma Immunophenotyping”, “Non-Gynecological Cytology”, etc.)
- If minimum volumes for all tests are not available, then the clinician will be called to prioritize. If they cannot be reached, general lab staff will prioritize testing based on the “primary reason” specified.
- A secondary review of microbiology tests will continue to be performed by microbiology staff, as has been done in the past, and may result in additional phone calls to the clinician to triage testing.

Action Required

- Please collect 4 (or at least 3) tubes per the guidelines as aliquoting by lab is often not possible.
 - The guideline includes recommendations on how to source the correct tubes.
- When collecting CSF, use the Guidelines to determine tube number and volume (mL) needed.
 - Note that the lab avoids testing on Tube 1 due frequent blood contamination.
 - **Try to collect less CSF in Tube 1 (0.5-1.0 ml) and more in the other tubes.**
- CSF collectors (eg. Radiology) who need to view and/or release Orders are encouraged to use “Order Inquiry” under the Views tab: “Lab Order Inquiry – CSF”. This View groups all outstanding CSF orders together to prevent any being missed.
- If additional testing may be needed later, order a “CSF Tube, Hold” and collect extra fluid into Tube 4 or higher. If needed later, click on “CSF Tube, Hold” in “Chart” to see if there was sufficient sample to hold; call the number provided in the “Comment” (1-877-868-6848) to Add-On testing.



Effective

- April 29, 2024

Questions/Concerns

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Approved by

- Dr. Carolyn O'Hara, Chief Medical Laboratory Officer, Alberta Precision Labs

Effective September 1, 2023, APL has become the sole provider of all public lab services in Alberta. As a result, community lab services formally provided by DynaLIFE Medical Labs will become the responsibility of Alberta Precision Labs (APL). This change impacts all zones.