

**Date:** June 28, 2016  
**To:** All Central Zone Clinicians;  
Particularly Emergency Physician, Orthopedic Surgeons and Family Physicians  
who practice Arthrocentesis  
**From:** AHS Laboratory Services  
**Re:** Discontinuation of Examination of Joint Fluid for Cytology

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

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**Key Messages:**

Cytologic examination of joint fluid is often ordered in conjunction with cell count, examination for crystals, culture and (occasionally) Gram stain. Cytologic examination rarely if ever contributes useful information, as neoplastic processes are exceedingly rare in joint fluid. A review of joint fluid cytology reports from 2010 to present day (251 cases) in Central Zone confirmed this well known fact, in that all cases were benign.

The test is not considered to contribute to the care of the patient and will therefore be discontinued as of July 4, 2016.

Other testing of joint fluid remains unchanged.

**Why this is important:**

The test is not considered to contribute to the care of the patient.

**Action Required:**

**The test will be discontinued as of July 4, 2016**

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

If there are any questions regarding this change, please contact:

Dr. A. Dee Thompson at [angela.thompson@ahs.ca](mailto:angela.thompson@ahs.ca) or 403-343-4714.

**This bulletin has been reviewed and approved by:**

**Dr. Garnet Horne, Central Zone Clinical Department Head, Pathology and Laboratory Medicine**