



**Date:** May 20, 2020  
**To:** North Zone, North Zone Physicians, Nurses, Unit Locations  
**From:** Microbiology Section, Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL) and DynaLIFE Medical Labs  
**Re:** Expansion of Rapid COVID-19 Testing to Emergency Department Patients at NLRHC, NWHC, STGH and LAACC

---

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

---

**Key Message:**

- Effective **May 21, 2020**, requests for rapid COVID-19 testing on specimens submitted from **Emergency Department (ED) patients** at Northern Lights Regional Health Centre (NLRHC), Northwest Health Centre (NWHC) and surrounding rural hospitals (St. Theresa General Hospital and La Crete Acute Ambulatory Care Centre) will be performed using the rapid GeneXpert® nucleic acid test (NAT). **All inpatients** that meet criteria for rapid testing and have rapid testing ordered will continue to have the GeneXpert® test performed.
- Specimens will be transported to NWHC by routine courier.
- Acceptable specimens include nasopharyngeal swabs or throat swabs (polyester or cotton) in Universal Transport Media (UTM), sterile saline or eSwab™ collection kits, endotracheal tube aspirates, and bronchoalveolar lavages.
- Specimens collected from patients in assessment centers, long term care facilities and in the community will continue to be forwarded to the APL – Public Health Laboratory.

**Why this is Important:**

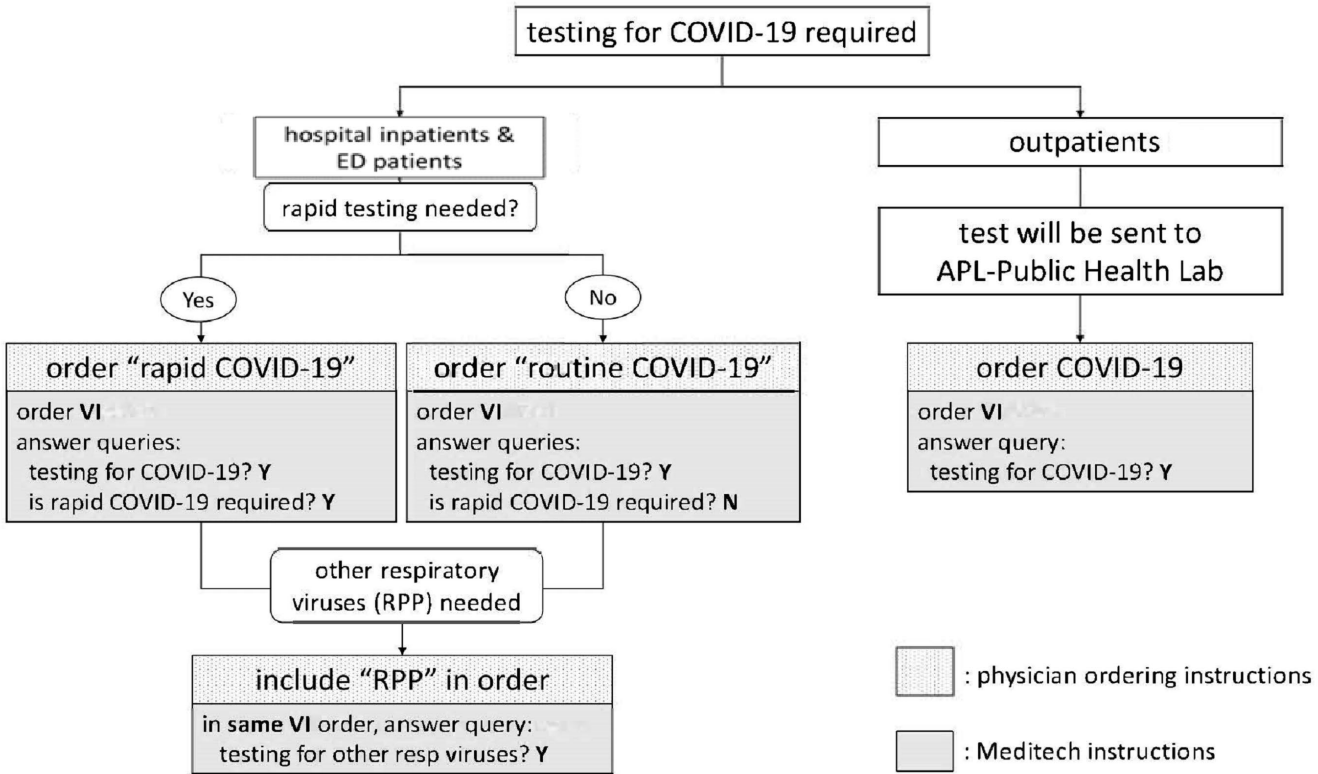
- The GeneXpert® assay targets the N and S genes of SARS-CoV-2, the etiologic agent of COVID-19.
- Its performance is comparable to the laboratory-developed test used at the APL – Public Health Laboratory. Additional confirmatory testing is not necessary.
- Because of limited supply, this test is currently being offered to hospital ED and inpatients only.

**Action Required:**

- Ensure all orders for rapid COVID-19 are submitted in Meditech (see flow chart attached).
  - If rapid COVID-19 testing is required, order as “rapid COVID-19”.
  - If COVID-19 testing is needed, but not urgently, order as “routine COVID-19”.
  - If testing for other respiratory viruses is needed, order “RPP”. The respiratory pathogen panel (RPP) will no longer be automatically performed on all COVID-19 tests.
- Repeat rapid COVID-19 test requests and testing of outpatients will continue to be sent to the APL – Public Health Laboratories in Edmonton.
- **All results will be available in Netcare. The results will not be viewable in Meditech.**
- Contact and droplet precautions should only be discontinued in accordance with Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) guidelines or consultation and should take into account the patient’s clinical and radiological findings.



- **Ordering staff: all COVID-19 and other viral testing should be ordered as VI.**
  - See Meditech instructions on flow chart (attached, shaded boxes).



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

Dr. Bob Verity, Interim Microbiology Director, DynaLIFE  
 Tel: (780) 451-3702 Ext. 8157  
 Or after 4pm and on weekends  
 DynaLIFE Microbiologist On-Call  
 Tel: (780) 451-3702

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

Dr. Raymond Lai, Medical Director, *DynaLIFE* Medical Labs  
 Dr. Michael Mengel, Medical Director, Northern Zone