

Provincial Laboratory Services



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Health PEI
One Island Health System

New Respiratory Panel (RP) testing for PEI onsite at QEH and PCH

November 23, 2020

This information applies to: Island Physicians, Nurse Practitioners and Administrators

Influenza season is markedly delayed in Canada and could follow a similar outcome of Australia where less than 5% of historical activity was noted for their flu season. The Chief public health office has not yet indicated when influenza seasons has started. Starting immediately, Health PEI will have expanded testing at both QEH and PCH labs.

Through support from the Public Health Agency of Canada both QEH and PCH now have advanced respiratory panel (RP) testing on the BioFire platform. This was previously a send out to Halifax with a three to seven day turn around. Results at both local sites are likely to be within 4 hours (no change from previous) with the exception of overnight testing at QEH which will wait for the next morning. COVID-19 testing can still occur overnight at QEH through Hematology after 11:30pm on a stat / call basis.

At this time almost all PCH / QEH ER, PCH / QEH testing for COVID or influenza or RSV will be automatically modified "or reflexed" to the RP with 23 targets. The Novel coronavirus test result will indicate tested by respiratory panel. The strategy of going to RP is based on our current supplies, current epidemiology (lack of influenza), and future test development, and is expected to evolve in the next 4 to 6 weeks. **This will also require a combined NP / throat swab by respiratory therapy or alternate in universal transport media (UTM; Pink/red fluid).**

The RP tests for the following:

COVID-19 virus (SARS-CoV-2)	Influenza A with subtyping	Bacteria:
Coronavirus HKU1*	Influenza B	<i>Bordetella pertussis</i> †
Coronavirus NL63*	RSV	<i>Bordetella parapertussis</i> †
Coronavirus 229E*	Human Metapneumovirus	<i>Mycoplasma pneumoniae</i> ‡
Coronavirus OC43*	Human Rhinovirus/Enterovirus	<i>Chlamydia pneumoniae</i> ‡
Parainfluenza Virus 1	Parainfluenza Virus 3	
Parainfluenza Virus 2	Parainfluenza Virus 4	

*When positive these will be clearly identified as non-pandemic coronavirus to reduce confusion.

† Pertussis testing when specifically requested is tested with an on-island Pertussis assay.

‡ Tests requests for atypical pneumonia will be run on the RP assay when received in UTM.

RP testing in the community and community hospitals including ER:

- Cough and fever clinics in those presenting with both a cough and a current fever. RPs limited to 10 patients per clinic per week. **(Use Microbiology request form and check viral respiratory panel and add symptoms)**. Do not swab for COVID separately.
- Institutional clusters (requires 2 but no more than 3 residents meeting influenza like illness definition in the last 7 days **and** as directed by CPHO) **(Use Microbiology request form and check viral respiratory panel)**
- Paeds Clinics available upon request. Please provide history / severity
- RP testing including FLU / RSV is not currently readily available for any other clinic, or hospital, without prior arrangement or discussion with the Medical Microbiologist.

We also want to offer a week-by-week surveillance of our respiratory virus results here:

https://src.healthpei.ca/sites/src.healthpei.ca/files/Laboratory%20Services/Fluwatch_Week.pdf.

(Please note the coronavirus column is in reference to non-pandemic “Common cold” coronavirus).

For more information or questions regarding this test process, contact:

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