

Provincial Laboratory Services



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Health PEI
One Island Health System

Updated Testing Guidance for COVID-19

November 12, 2020 (Replaces October 8, 2020)

This information applies to: Physicians, Nurse Practitioners and Administrators

The following provides CURRENT AND **NEW CRITERIA (in bold)** for testing for COVID-19 for both routine and stat purposes.

For further clarity on updated testing and isolation for workers, including health care workers and rotational workers, please visit: <https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/health-and-wellness/travelling-workers-and-isolation-requirements>

Pre-travel approval is still required for travelers into PEI. For information, please visit: <https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/justice-and-public-safety/pre-travel-approval-process>

Emergency Department

- Any person presenting with new onset of fever without an alternative explanation or new or worsening cough, sore throat, rhinitis, marked fatigue, shortness of breath, chills, headache, myalgia, or acute loss of sense of smell or taste without an alternative explanation should be tested.
- Patients on self-isolation and undergoing a surgical procedure requiring or may require general anesthetic.

Community Clinics

- Any person presenting with new onset of fever without an alternative explanation or new or worsening cough, sore throat, rhinitis, marked fatigue, shortness of breath, chills, headache, myalgia, or acute loss of sense of smell or taste without an alternative explanation should be tested.
- Any person who was in close contact with (1) a symptomatic case starting 48 hours prior to the case developing symptoms or (2) a laboratory confirmed asymptomatic case starting 48 hours prior to the day their positive specimen was collected, should be tested 7 days after their last exposure to the case.

Clinical judgement remains important in the differential diagnosis and work-up of individuals presenting with these symptoms, considering both our local epidemiology and the patient's exposure risks. For instance, seasonal allergies or post-immunization fever may be considered as alternative diagnoses.

Exposure Notification by the COVID Alert App

- Any person who has received an exposure notification from the COVID Alert app should be tested.

Cough and fever clinics are available in Charlottetown and Summerside to provide assessment, alternative explanation for symptoms and symptom management. All clients of the cough and fever clinic, as well as swabbing clinics, are being tested. Clinics can be accessed through 811 or referred by a health care provider; email: Coughandfeverclinic@gov.pe.ca.

Drop-in testing sites are available at locations across PEI for those with symptoms of COVID-19. Testing is offered on a first-come, first serve basis at these clinics, with no referral necessary.

Admitted Patients

- Any person hospitalized > 48hrs with influenza-like-illness (ILI; fever without an alternate explanation and new or worsening cough, sore throat, joint pain, muscle aches, fatigue).
- Any person admitted to the ICU with a respiratory symptom (if there is a strong non-viral alternative diagnosis contact the medical microbiologist).
- Patients that would otherwise be on self-isolation and undergoing a surgical procedure requiring or may require general anesthetic.
- Inpatients at **QEH Unit 9**, Hillsborough Hospital, Provincial Addiction Treatment Facility, and Prince County Hospital Inpatient Psychiatry Unit should be tested on admission (routine test unless symptomatic; if symptomatic for COVID-19, Stat test).

Health Care Workers (HCW)

- Any current HCW with a new cough and/or fever, sore throat, rhinitis, marked fatigue, shortness of breath, chills, headache, myalgia, or acute loss of sense of smell or taste without an alternative explanation should be tested.
- Any current HCW arriving to PEI from within Canada, but outside of the Atlantic Provinces – test at 0-2, 4-7, and 10-12 days; HCW must test negative prior to start of work-isolation.
- Any current HCW arriving to PEI from anywhere outside of Canada – test at 0-2 and 10-12 days and must self-isolate. Note, HCWs arriving to PEI from anywhere outside of Canada are not permitted to work until they finish their 14-day period of self-isolation.
- Weekly testing of LTC staff (public and private) who work in more than one healthcare site, regardless of how frequent they work in LTC (e.g., staff member who works in LTC once a month would require testing every 7 days). For staff with very infrequent visits (i.e., less than monthly), an alternate approach is to test between 48 and 96 hours prior to working and test again at 7 days. For unscheduled/urgent work, staff can be tested after their work shift and again at 7 days.
- Weekly testing of Microbiology staff at the QEH.

Health Care Workers can be assessed for testing by calling: 1-855-354-4358.

Locum physicians or returning physicians that require testing prior to work should reach out to their medical director or coordinator. With assistance from the medical microbiologist, initial testing can be arranged at QEH Same Day treatment unit (8AM to 7:30PM on weekdays; 8AM to 3:30PM on weekends) or the PCH ER. There is a more detailed encounter registration form for same day treatment.

Long-term Care/Community Care/Palliative Care Facilities – Residents

- Test residents of long-term care facility **or palliative care facility** 24-48 hours before transfer/admission to the facility, at 3 to 4 days, and at 10 to 12 days.
- Test residents of community care facility 24-48 hours before transfer/admission to the facility and at 7 days.

Inter-Facility Transfers

- Asymptomatic transfers to other acute care facilities (excluding LTC and CCF) do not require testing at this time, as there is no documented community transmission or reservoir in PEI hospitals.
- Testing can be provided for anyone who requires a test prior to procedure/surgery/ etc. at an out-of-province (OOP) facility.

Long-term Care Service Providers

- Weekly testing of service providers **who have direct physical contact with residents** (e.g., hairdressers, foot care worker, seamstress, etc.) in long-term care facilities.

Correctional Facility Admissions and Staff

- Test (routine testing) on admission to the facility (if had not already tested in past 48 hours) and at 7 days post admission.

Workers with Travel Outside of Atlantic Canada

Rotational Workers

Rotational workers are those on a set work schedule, with ≥50% of their time working outside of PEI, and who are home for 21 days or less.

- PEI residents who are rotational workers arriving to PEI from within Canada, but outside of the Atlantic Provinces – test at 0-2, 4-7, and 10-12 days.*
- PEI residents who are rotational workers arriving to PEI from anywhere outside of Canada:
 - If working while in PEI – test at 0-2, 4-7, and 10-12 days;*
 - If not working while in PEI – see International Arrivals below.

Other Workers

- Workers (residents and non-residents) arriving to PEI from within Canada, but outside of the Atlantic Provinces – test at 0-2, 4-7, and 10-12 days; must test negative prior to start of work-isolation.*
- Workers (residents and non-residents) arriving to PEI from outside of Canada:
 - If working while in PEI – test at 0-2, 4-7, and 10-12 days*
 - If not working while in PEI – see International Arrivals below.

International Arrivals (including students)

- Test international arrivals at 0-2 and 10-12 days.*

Domestic Students – Arriving From Outside of the Atlantic Bubble

- Test at 0-2, 4-7, and 10-12 days.*
- If isolating at a designated facility, test at 0-2 and 10-12 days.

Seasonal Residents / Family Support / Family Connections

- Seasonal residents and travelers arriving from outside of Atlantic Canada to provide support to or to reconnect with PEI residents may be considered for testing on a case-by-case basis.*
- Family members visiting terminally ill inpatients. Testing is available on a one-time basis only, which would allow visitation(s) for 12 hours from the time of the test during the first 7 days on PEI or for 24 hours from the time of the test for the remaining isolation. Testing services are available at both QEH Same Day treatment unit and PCH ER. The test request is initiated by administration or nursing supervisor responsible for the inpatient. There is a form (Appendix B sent out with Oct. 2 memo) to facilitate processing. Do not go to QEH ER or testing clinics for testing.*

*Please note: The Testing Memo does not address all requirements for self-isolation. For the most up-to-date direction on self-isolation requirements and exemptions, please consult relevant information on the Government of PEI COVID-19 website or sector specific guidance, as appropriate.

Screeners at Points of Entry

- Weekly testing for personnel screening travelers at points of entry (bridge, airport, and ferry terminals).

Postmortem

- Test upon autopsy.

Requirement for COVID-19 Test for Entry into an International Country

- Travelers requiring a COVID-19 test to enter another country may be tested.

Expected International Travelers need to call 1-833-533-9333 or email COVIDtravel@gov.pe.ca to reach the scheduling clinic at least 5 days before travel to book an appointment approximately 28 to 42 hours before departure to allow 72 hours before arrival to receiving country. Turnaround times for testing for international travel cannot be guaranteed.

Testing Outside of Guidelines

- Contact the CPHO on call for consideration of testing outside of guidelines for outpatients, including any patients under the care of an ER physician.
- Contact the microbiologist on call for inpatients.

STAT TESTING

Routine testing for COVID-19 is offered multiple times per day with turnaround times between 6 and 24 hours upon receipt to the QEH Laboratory. Swabs must arrive to the lab within 24 hours of collection. The request for Stat testing must meet PEI guidance or be directed by the Chief Public Health Office or the Medical Microbiologist.

The following would be considered for Stat (vs routine) testing:

- ER for admitted patients at QEH, PCH, KCMH, Western Hospital that meet routine criteria.
- Patients admitted to the ICU or require critical care in the ED, including **Code Blue cases where the patient is suspected COVID-19 or their risk factors are unknown.**
- Symptomatic admissions to Labor and Delivery
- Symptomatic admissions to **QEH Unit 9**, Hillsborough Hospital, Provincial Addiction Treatment Facility, and Prince County Hospital Inpatient Psychiatry Unit
- Symptomatic residents of long-term care (LTC)
- Symptomatic pediatric patients admitted to hospital
- Offenders with symptoms transported by police officers
- Requests approved by CPHO or the microbiologist on call (see Testing Outside of Guidelines above)

QEH & PCH ER: All samples from QEH & PCH ER arriving in the lab between 8:00AM to 11:30PM will be processed STAT without the need of a phone call. The porter will directly drop off samples that will be completed typically within 2 to 3 hours. Nursing, RT, and medical staff are directed to NOT call the lab for a status update until 4 hours have passed (see critical below). After 11:30PM, Stats from QEH ER still require a page to the hematology technologist, or they will be processed at 8:00AM by Microbiology.

With the exception of the QEH & PCH ER above, all Stat microbiology requests require a phone call to the receiving laboratory or they will not be processed Stat. The technologist will ask if the test is on Stat guidelines, it is the caller's responsibility to know the guidelines. If not on guidelines, the technologist will ask if CPHO or the Medical Microbiologist has approved. When ordering the test, information provided on the requisition will assist in clarifying if the test meets guidelines or has been previously approved. Microbiologist on call will review these documents and may contact the ordering provider or service as necessary.

Stat tests are provided at QEH microbiology in dedicated windows 8 AM, 10 AM, noon, 2 PM, 4 PM, 6 PM, 8 PM, 10 PM, as well as overnight by Hematology at 1 AM, 3 AM, and 5 AM. PCH now offers the same time slots.

If there are times that testing needs to be completed even faster, i.e., “Critical”, then page the microbiologist on call directly. If overnight (after 11:30 PM), then contact Hematology technologist at QEH or the overnight technologist at PCH first to see if they can accommodate. If a test has been submitted and the patients status changes to critical then follow the same process. Any calls received before 4 hours from time of collection from PCH ER or QEH ER will be redirected to the medical microbiologist or covering pathologist on call.

For on Guidelines or CPHO/Microbiologist on call approved Stat testing call:

Time	QEH Microbiology Testing	PCH Main Lab
8:00AM – 4:00PM	894-2312	438-4285
4:00PM – 11:30PM	2111 (ask for Microbiology tech)	438-4285
11:30PM – 8:00AM	2111 (ask for Hematology tech)	438-4285

The Chief/Deputy Public Health Officers may be reached through locating at QEH or CPHO 902-368-4996 or CPHO nurse on-call 1-902-213-5824.

The Medical Microbiologist may be reached through locating or through 902-894-2515.

Testing Indications Removed from Previous Memo

- Weekly testing of correctional facility staff who work at more than one facility (e.g., corrections and LTC).
- Testing of inpatients returning from OOP (within Atlantic Canada) facilities.

Thank you all for your cooperation and dedication to all Islanders in these challenging times.

Please let us know if you have any questions or clarifications.

By: Dr. Heather Morrison, CPHO
 Dr. Greg German, Medical Microbiologist