

Provincial Laboratory Services



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Health PEI
One Island Health System

Updated Testing Guidance for COVID-19

February 26, 2021 (Replaces February 17, 2021)

This information applies to: Physicians, Nurse Practitioners and Administrators

As we approach the one-year mark since reporting our first case of COVID-19, our testing strategy continues to reflect our ongoing work to minimize the importation of SARS-CoV-2 into PEI, as well to rapidly find, test, trace, isolate, and support to suppress transmission of the virus. With the increasing spread across Canada, and globally, of variants of concern with greater transmissibility, it becomes even more important and more challenging to curtail introduction of the virus. We respond to these ongoing challenges with progressive refinements to our testing guidance and by strengthening our reconciliation of testing records against testing requirements.

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/service/travelling-workers>

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.
- Any person who visited a location in Atlantic Canada that is listed for possible COVID-19 exposure at the specified date and time should be tested. For a full list of exposure locations within Atlantic Canada, please visit: <https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/health-and-wellness/possible-exposure-covid-19-within-atlantic-bubble>

- Taxi drivers and ride-share drivers who pick-up fares from the Charlottetown airport, who transport passengers off-Island, **or who transport passengers to a Cough and Fever clinic or COVID-19 testing site** should be tested weekly, or more frequently if symptoms occur.
- Commercial bus drivers who transport passengers off-Island should be tested weekly, or more frequently if symptoms occur.

Clinical judgement remains important in the differential diagnosis and work-up of individuals presenting with 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 are being tested. Clinics can be accessed through 811 or referred by a health care provider via email: Coughandfeverclinic@gov.pe.ca.

Clients can submit an online request for an appointment for COVID-19 testing or Cough and Fever assessment by visiting the website: <https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/service/request-an-appointment-for-covid-19-testing-for-pei-residents>

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.
- 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 (except in long-term care and community care) arriving to PEI from within Canada – test at 0-1, 4-6, and 9-11 days; HCW must test negative prior to start of work isolation.
- Any current HCW working in long-term care or community care who travel outside of PEI must self-isolate for 14 days on return to PEI and cannot return to work until the period of self-isolation is complete.
- Any current HCW arriving to PEI from anywhere outside of Canada – test at 0-1, **4-6**, and 9-11 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. NOTE: Testing of LTC staff that move between facilities applies regardless of vaccination status.

- Weekly testing of long-term care and community care staff who reside with someone who is:
 - exempt from self-isolation following travel (e.g., registered rotational workers or truck drivers),
 - a taxi/ride-share driver who picks-up fares from the Charlottetown airport, who transports passengers off-Island, **or who transports passengers to a Cough and Fever clinic or COVID-19 testing site**, or
 - a commercial bus driver who transports passengers off-Island.
 - NOTE: Testing requirements described above apply regardless of vaccination status.
- Weekly testing of Microbiology staff at the QEH.

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

Locum physicians, returning physicians, medical residents or medical students that require testing prior to work should reach out to their medical director or coordinator. There is a QEH form (Appendix B) that can be filled out and emailed to QEHADmitting@ihis.org for on-site QEH testing until 10PM daily.

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

- Test residents of long-term care, community care, or palliative care facility 24-48 hours before transfer/admission to the facility, at 3 to 4 days, and at 10 to 12 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.
- Inpatients returning from OOP facilities who were off-Island for ≤ 24 hours require routine testing at 48 hours; test again at 7 days post admission. Testing is not required if patient is no longer an inpatient.
- Inpatients returning from OOP facilities who were off-Island for > 24 hours require routine testing on arrival; test again at 7 days post admission. Testing is not required if patient is no longer an inpatient.

Long-term Care / Community 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 and community care facilities.
- Weekly testing of Partners in Care is NOT required.

Correctional Facility Admissions

- 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

Rotational Workers (including Truck Drivers)

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

- PEI residents who are rotational workers returning from out of province travel – test at 0-1, 4-6, and 9-11 days (if still in the province). Testing frequency resets with each arrival.*
- PEI residents who are rotational workers and who are arriving in PEI multiple times each week should be tested at least **once every 5 days; deviation of 24 hours is permissible if accessing a clinic is a challenge**.*
- **If working while in PEI within 14 days of arrival, PEI residents who are rotational workers returning from travel outside of the Maritimes (outside NB & NS) – test every other day for the first 10 days (if still in the province).***

Other Workers

- **Workers (residents and non-residents) arriving to PEI from Nova Scotia or New Brunswick – test at 0-1, 4-6, and 9-11 days.***
- **Workers (residents and non-residents) arriving to PEI from outside of the Maritimes (outside NS & NB) – test every other day for the first 10 days (if still in the province).***
- Workers (residents and non-residents) arriving in PEI multiple times each week (even if in PEI for <24 hours) should be tested at least **once every 5 days; deviation of 24 hours is permissible if accessing a clinic is a challenge.***

Other Travelers

Domestic Arrivals

- **Domestic arrivals from outside the Maritimes (NB & NS) – test at 0-1, 4-6, and 9-11 days.***
- Domestic students arriving from outside of PEI – test at 0-1, 4-6, and 9-11 days; if isolating at a designated facility, test at 0-1 and 9-11 days.*
- Unless already being tested under a different stream, travelers into PEI who are coming from a ‘red’ zone** within Atlantic Canada (even if in PEI for <24 hours) – test on arrival.*
- Unless already being tested under a different stream, PEI residents who traveled to a ‘red’ zone** within Atlantic Canada for same-day essential travel – test on Day 4.*

**As of Feb. 26, ‘red’ zones within Atlantic Canada include Newfoundland & Labrador; for up-to-date information on recovery phase status across Atlantic Canada, visit:

- NB: <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/8eeb9a2052d641c996dba5de8f25a8aa>
- NS: <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/county-restrictions/>
- NL: <https://www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19/>

International Arrivals (including students)

- Test international arrivals at 0-1, 4-6, and 9-11 days.*
- If isolating at a designated facility, test at 0-1 and 9-11 days.*

Funerals / Custody Arrangements / Family Support or Connections/ Seasonal Residents

- Travelers arriving to PEI to attend a funeral and/or wake, test at 0-1, 4-6, and 9-11 days (if still in the province). Must receive a negative test prior to attending the funeral/wake.*
- Children traveling out of province as part of a custody arrangement, upon return to PEI, test at 0-1, 4-6, and 9-11 days. Must receive a negative test prior to returning to school/daycare.*
- **Parents arriving to PEI as part of a custody arrangement, test at 0-1, 4-6, and 9-11 days. ***
- Seasonal residents and travelers arriving to PEI to provide support to or to reconnect with PEI residents may be considered for testing on a case-by-case basis.*
- Visitors arriving to PEI for the purpose of compassionate visits to be with a dying family member or for the birth of a child, test at 0-1, 4-6, and 9-11 days (if still in the province). Must receive a negative test prior to the first visitation.* For those visiting a facility, please confirm with the facility the testing and approval process, as the facility will need to be contacted by the laboratory for the negative result. Administration or nursing supervisor responsible for the inpatient initiates the test request and produces an authorized visitor letter sent to PEI Office of Public Safety. Follow instructions on where to get tested routinely with results the same day. In select situations when a test is needed sooner at the QEH, the QEH unit will use Appendix B.

*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 microbiologist on call.

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 of having 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
- As needed, the first test for off-Island nursing and medical staff working in acute care facilities
- As needed, the first test for off-Island technical workers (vendors, service personnel) who work in acute care facilities or long-term care facilities (See Appendix B for this request)
- As needed, the first test for workers with domestic travel who work in healthcare, meat packing plants, fish plants, correctional facilities, schools, early year centres/daycares
- 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 microbiologist on call 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 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 microbiologist on call may be reached through QEH switchboard at 902-894-2111

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.

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