Health PEI
One Island Health System

Four Neighborhoods Health Centre
152 St. Peter's Road
Charlottetown, PE
C1A 5P8
www.healthpei.ca

Santé Î.-P.-É.
Un système de santé unique

Four Neighborhoods Health Centre
152, Chemin St. Peters
C.P. 2000 Charlottetown
l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard
www.healthpei.ca

TO: Physicians, Nurse Practitioners, Registered Nurses and Primary Care Staff

FROM: Dr Kristen Mead, Medical Director of Provincial Laboratory Services, Anja Nied-Kutterer, Colorectal/Cervical Screening Coordinator

DATE: 2023-May-10

SUBJECT: New collection requirements for Cervical Cancer Screening (HPV/PAP)

Collection requirements change for Cervical Cancer Screening

Cervical screening is used to screen women and individuals with a cervix aged 25-65 for abnormalities. **On May 23, 2023, Provincial Laboratory Services will replace the conventional Pap smear with primary HPV (human papilloma virus) testing** using PCR to screen patients for cervical cancer. This change will have the following impacts:

- **The collection device and platform will change.** As of May 23, 2023, the **lab is changing to Liquid-based Cytology (LBC)** and will no longer be accepting conventional Pap smears.
- Depending on the result of the HPV test, the lab may reflexively order **a liquid based Pap test**. This **can be performed on the same sample as the HPV test**, so there is no requirement for the clinician to obtain an additional sample.
- **The HPV test results** will be resulted by the Microbiology lab with a **turnaround time of approximately 1 to 2** weeks.
- **HPV reports will have a PV prefix** to the lab number (i.e. papilloma virus). Pap tests reports will continue to be resulted with a GY prefix.
- The turnaround time of Pap test results is presently several months but this will continue decrease in the coming months with the onboarding of HPV testing.

Actions you will need to take:

- **Obtain sample containers for liquid-based HPV and Pap testing from the Microbiology Department** at the QEH by calling or leaving a message at 902-894-2314, or by emailing vlarseneau@ihis.org. These supplies will eventually be made available through Materials Management at the QEH (as most lab supplies are) and clients will be notified in advance of when that change is planned to occur.

- **Acquire the new Lab Requisition for Cytology and HPV**. https://src.healthpei.ca/laboratory-requisitions
- **Learn how to obtain a liquid-based specimen for HPV and Pap testing** by watching a short video. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QDXbrOmxqHA
- Review the 2023 Cervical Cancer Screening Guidelines and clinical pathways. https://src.healthpei.ca/cervical-cancer-screening

Frequently Asked Questions and Answers:

1. **Why is Cervical Cancer Screening switching to an HPV/liquid-based methodology?**
   HPV is a more sensitive test for detecting precancerous cervical cells. It can be used in conjunction with liquid based cytology (LBC), which is a well-established preparation method for cervical screening samples. Laboratory Services is switching to primary HPV testing to screen for cervical cancer and LBC can be performed using the same clinician collected sample so patients do not have to return for additional sampling.
2. **What is the difference between conventional cytology and liquid based cytology?**
   With both methods, a cervical sample is collected during a speculum examination of the cervix. LBC can be collected using a similar spatula and cytobrush that are provided with the vials. These collection devices will resemble what is used for conventional cytology sample collection. Once collected, the cells on the device are transferred into a container containing an alcohol-based fixative. The liquid sample is submitted to the laboratory instead of a glass slide. The LBC method is considered clinically equivalent to conventional Pap testing for detecting precancerous changes and cancer. The follow-up algorithm for conventional cytology and LBC are the same, and there is no change to how your office will receive results.
3. **How will the transition to LBC affect my patient's Pap testing experience?**
   The sampling technique for LBC is the same for both conventional and LBC cytology and it is not expected that patients will notice any difference. The use of lubricants during sampling is discouraged as it may interfere with sample processing and yield an unsatisfactory result. If a lubricant is required (e.g. in post-menopausal patients), then a tiny amount of a carbomer-free lubricant may be used. The recommended brand is Surgilube®.
4. **If a patient is waiting for a conventional cytology Pap test to be reported, should I repeat the screening with LBC?**
   No. Laboratory Services has been contracting with multiple vendors to address the back log in conventional Pap tests and to screen the new LBC Pap tests. In the coming months, the back log and the turnaround time will decrease. High risk patient Pap tests are being prioritized. You may notice that more recent LBC Pap tests are resulted before conventional Pap tests in some cases.

Laboratory Services is currently working on a self-sampling option for HPV testing. We will also be transitioning all non-gynecologic cytology specimens to liquid-based methodology. This will be announced with further information in the coming months.