

Executive Officer Notice: Publicly Funded COVID-19 Antigen Point-of-Care Testing in Ontario Pharmacies

September 8, 2021

This Executive Officer Notice replaces the previous Executive Officer Notice with regard to publicly funded COVID-19 Antigen Point-of-Care Testing issued on September 3, 2021. Updates in this notice provide important information relating to pharmacy billing procedures.

The Ontario government is increasing access to publicly funded COVID-19 antigen point-of-care tests (POCT) to select persons in Ontario.

To support the Ministry of Education's return to school plan, **from September 7 to September 21st, 2021**, pharmacies are eligible to provide publicly funded COVID-19 antigen POCTs in pharmacies at no cost to the following eligible asymptomatic individuals:

- Staff of elementary and secondary public schools (including school bus drivers, supply and specialty teachers), school boards, and child care settings who:
 1. Have a letter from their employer indicating they are subject to testing requirements;
 2. Present valid identification confirming their identity; and
 3. Have not received two or more COVID-19 antigen POCTs within the past seven (7) days.

Pharmacists conducting antigen POCTs are responsible for adhering to the [COVID-19: Considerations for Antigen Point-of-Care Testing](#) guidelines. This includes satisfying all applicable legislative and regulatory requirements, including those under the [Health Protection and Promotion Act \(HPPA\)](#), [Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004 \(PHIPA\)](#), [Health Care Consent Act \(HCCA\)](#), and [Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 \(RHPA\)](#).

All persons are exempt from licensing requirements under the *Laboratory and Specimen Collection Centre Licensing Act* while performing COVID-19 POCT (including the specimen collection required to perform the POCT). However, this Notice sets out conditions for the public funding of antigen POCTs conducted by pharmacies.

Training materials for conducting antigen POCTs are available from Ontario Health in an online format and include a suite of [written materials and pre-recorded training modules](#). Participation in training is not a mandatory requirement of this program but will help build competence for those performing the POCTs.

This notice and the accompanying Pharmacist Qs and As document constitute a Ministry policy that pharmacy operators must comply with when submitting claims for payment to the Ministry for COVID-19 antigen point-of-care testing services. Compliance with all Ministry policies is required under section 3.2 of the Health Network System (HNS) Subscription Agreement for Pharmacy Operators.

Obtaining Test Kits

Pharmacies are responsible for procuring their own supply of COVID-19 antigen POCT kits. However, where supply is immediately unavailable, the province may provide pharmacies with additional supply. If a pharmacy is utilizing provincially procured POCT kits, the cost of the test kit (\$7.85 inclusive of HST) will be deducted from the total amount paid to the pharmacy. Please see Table 1 below for more details.

Please note that COVID-19 antigen POCT kits procured through federal programs **CANNOT** be utilized for this service without explicit authorization from the federal government.

Pharmacy Billing Procedure

- While the pharmacist, pharmacy student / intern assistant, or pharmacy technician who collects the COVID-19 specimen and performs the POCT must be identified on the pharmacy patient’s record, the pharmacist supervising those activities must be identified in the prescriber field on the claim for payment submitted through the HNS using the PINs identified below.
- Pharmacies must ensure that the patient’s name, date of birth and Ontario health card number are entered accurately as part of the HNS claims submission.
- For patients without a health card number, pharmacies can use the proxy patient ID: 79999 999 93 (see below for further details).
- COVID-19 antigen POCT includes a number of components which are eligible for payment through the HNS by the Ontario government. Table 1 below describes the components that are included when submitting the PINs for payment.

Table 1: PINs to support payment of services relating to COVID-19 antigen POCTs

PIN	Description	Total Amount Paid
09858137	<p>Privately Sourced Antigen Point of Care Test Fee (COVID-19 Specimen) *</p> <p>Amount paid includes reimbursement for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The <u>privately</u> procured COVID-19 antigen point-of-care test kit; 	\$40

PIN	Description	Total Amount Paid
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Protective Equipment (PPE); • Specimen collection; • Specimen testing; and • Communication of results to patient per guidance. 	
09858136	<p>Publicly Sourced Antigen Point of Care Test Fee (COVID-19 Specimen) *</p> <p>Amount paid includes reimbursement for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Protective Equipment (PPE); • Specimen collection; • Specimen testing; and • Communication of results to patient per guidance. <p><i>COVID-19 antigen POCT kits procured through federal programs CANNOT be utilized for this service without explicit authorization from the federal government.</i></p>	\$32.15

***Note:** No Antigen POCT Test Fee can be claimed for any individual who does not meet the eligibility requirements on page 1, including symptomatic individuals.

Claims must be submitted using the ministry-assigned PINs associated with the pharmacy service provided (see Table 1). Claims must be billed using the service date (i.e. the date on which the pharmacy service is provided).

When submitting a claim to the HNS for a person who has ODB coverage, the claim submission follows the normal ODB claim process, using their First Name, Last Name and Ontario health number (See [Section 5](#) of the Ontario Drug Program Reference Manual) and pharmacists must also submit the following additional information:

- Intervention code 'PS': (Professional Care Services)
- Valid Pharmacist ID
- Professional Fee: see table above for the "Total Amount Paid"

When submitting a claim for a person who does not have ODB coverage, pharmacists must also submit the following information:

- Patient Gender: 'F' = female; 'M' = male
- Patient Date of Birth: Valid YYYYMMDD
- Patient's Ontario health card number
- Intervention codes:
 - PS: Professional Care Services

- ML: Established eligibility coverage (i.e., 1 day of the Plan ‘S’ coverage)
- Carrier ID: ‘S’
- Valid Pharmacist ID
- Professional Fee: see table above for the “Total Amount Paid”

When submitting a claim for any eligible person who does not have an Ontario health card number, pharmacists must also submit the following information:

- Patient Gender: ‘F’ = female; ‘M’ = male
- Patient Date of Birth: Valid YYYYMMDD
- Proxy patient ID: 79999 999 93
- Intervention codes:
 - PS: Professional Care Services
 - PB: Name entered is consistent with card
- Valid Pharmacist ID
- Professional Fee: see table above for the “Total Amount Paid”

Restrictions

Pharmacies are limited to providing a maximum of 2 tests per week (7 days) per eligible individual.

POCT kits procured through federal programs CANNOT be used for this program without explicit authorization from the federal government.

Pharmacy Record Requirements

Pharmacists shall keep records consistent with their obligations under the *Pharmacy Act, 1991*, the *Drug and Pharmacies Regulation Act* and any instructions or guidelines provided by the Ontario College of Pharmacists (OCP) or the ministry.

For purposes of post-payment verification and compliance with applicable legislation, pharmacy records related to claims for pharmacy services related to COVID-19 antigen point-of-care testing must be maintained in a readily available format for the purpose of ministry inspection for a minimum of 10 years from the last recorded pharmacy service provided to the patient, or until 10 years after the day on which the patient reached or would have reached the age of 18 years, whichever is longer. Overpayments due to inappropriate claim submissions are subject to recovery.

Under this ministry policy, the records that must be maintained to support claims submitted for the **Privately Sourced Antigen Point of Care Test Fee (COVID-19 Specimen)** and the **Privately Sourced Antigen Point of Care Test Fee (COVID-19 Specimen)** include, at a minimum:

1. Documentation that shows the patient was screened for symptoms and eligibility, including a copy of the letter issued to the patient by their school/school board or child care centre confirming the patient's eligibility.
2. Documentation that shows PPE was donned (e.g., surgical mask (i.e., medical mask), gloves, face shield/goggles, gown) according to guidelines.
3. Invoices for POCT kits that are procured by the pharmacy, including a letter of authorization from the federal government if applicable.
4. Copy of the COVID-19 antigen POCT results communicated to the patient, which includes patient identifiers, date of service, name and signature of individual who collected the specimen, and test location.

Additional Information:

For pharmacies:

For billing inquiries, please call ODB Pharmacy Help Desk at: 1-800-668-6641

For all other Health Care Providers and the Public:

Please call ServiceOntario, Infoline at 1-866-532-3161 TTY 1-800-387-5559. In Toronto, TTY 416-327-4282