

Executive Officer Notice: Publicly Funded COVID-19 Testing Services in Ontario Pharmacies

November 18, 2021

This Executive Officer Notice replaces the previous Executive Officer (EO) notices for pharmacy services related to asymptomatic COVID-19 PCR testing that was effective August 27, 2021.

Effective November 18, select pharmacies that have been approved by the ministry are eligible to provide at no cost to eligible individuals the following pharmacy services related to publicly funded COVID-19 tests:

Type of Pharmacy Service	Type of COVID-19 Test
Specimen collection in pharmacy	Laboratory-based polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test
Handling of specimen self-collected by patient at home	
Specimen collection and performance of test in pharmacy	In-store point-of-care polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test

Patient Eligibility

Pharmacy services related to publicly funded COVID-19 testing may be offered to, or arranged for individuals as outlined in the [COVID-19 Provincial Testing Guidance](#), which includes but is not limited to¹:

1. Asymptomatic individuals who are part of these targeted groups:
 - Workers (including support workers), visitors (including caregivers) and government inspectors of long-term care homes;
 - Temporary Foreign Workers (TFW), including for the purpose of international travel to return to a country of origin;
 - Individuals who identify as Indigenous;

¹ This list may change from time to time. Please review the Ministry’s [COVID-19 Provincial Testing Guidance](#) for the most up to date eligibility criteria.

- Individuals, and one accompanying caregiver, with written prior approval for out-of-country medical services from the General Manager, OHIP;
 - Individuals who are travelling into remote/isolated First Nation and Indigenous communities for work purposes; and
 - Individuals who have received a positive antigen point-of-care test (POCT).
2. Symptomatic individuals with any symptom listed in the [COVID-19 Reference Document for Symptoms](#); and
 3. Individuals who have been identified as a high-risk contact of a known COVID-19 case.²

Pharmacies can only provide one type of pharmacy service for one type of test per individual per day. For example, if an eligible individual is seeking a lab-based PCR test, then the pharmacy may collect the individual's specimen at the pharmacy or receive the specimen collected by the individual at home using a self-collection kit, but not both, and the pharmacy cannot perform a point-of-care PCR test at the pharmacy for the individual on the same day. Similarly, if an eligible individual is seeking a point-of-care PCR test at the pharmacy, then the pharmacy cannot provide that individual with any services relating to a lab-based PCR test on the same day.

However, in the event that a self-collected specimen received from the individual is not viable (i.e. not pass the in-pharmacy quality control check), a second test can be provided and billed on the same day.

PCR self-collection kits will be distributed through all publicly funded elementary and secondary schools, and participating private and First Nations schools, to students and staff who are symptomatic or asymptomatic high-risk contacts of a confirmed case of COVID-19. As part of this program, participating pharmacies will act as drop-off locations for the self-collected specimens.

Please note that these criteria may change from time to time as the pandemic response evolves in the province. The most up-to-date information for pharmacies regarding patient eligibility will be included in this EO Notice, as updated from time to time.

Eligibility includes individuals who are eligible Ontario Drug Benefit (ODB) recipients, non-ODB recipients and those with or without an Ontario health card number. No eligible person will be charged for pharmacy services related to publicly funded COVID-19 testing services outlined in this Executive Officer Notice, even if they do not have an Ontario health card.

Pharmacists collecting specimens for lab-based PCR tests or performing point-of-care PCR tests are responsible for adhering to the [COVID-19: Provincial Testing Guidance](#) and the [COVID-19 Guidance: Testing of Individuals in Pharmacies](#). 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 \(RHPA\)](#).

² Please refer to Table 4: Contact Management Based on Exposure Setting and Type (p.35) of the Ministry's [Management of Cases and Contacts of COVID-19 in Ontario](#).

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 publicly funded COVID-19 testing services. Compliance with all Ministry policies is required under section 3.2 of the Health Network System (HNS) Subscription Agreement for Pharmacy Operators.

Investigation Numbers for Lab-Based PCR Tests

To successfully monitor COVID-19 rates of infection in long-term care homes, a list of Investigation Numbers associated with long-term care homes has been assigned by the Public Health Ontario Laboratory. It is **mandatory** for pharmacists to include the applicable Investigation Number on the test requisition forms for lab-based PCR testing for the following individuals:

- Workers (including support workers), visitors (including caregivers) and government inspectors of long-term care homes.

Individuals should be reminded to provide the name of their long-term care home when booking and attending their appointment to facilitate this process. Pharmacies must cross-reference the information provided by the individual with the lists of target settings provided by the Ministry of Health to confirm the individual's eligibility.

This requirement applies where the pharmacy is directly collecting the specimen for the lab-based PCR test, as well as where the pharmacy is handling a specimen that was self-collected by an individual at home using a self-collection kit.

Investigation Number may already be included in the self-collection kits distributed by schools that are used by eligible individuals at home and subsequently dropped-off at the pharmacy. However, it is **not** mandatory for a pharmacy to record an Investigation Number for these individuals.

The list of Investigation Numbers may be subject to change. The ministry will notify pharmacies of any changes.

Pharmacy Billing Procedure

- The pharmacist who performs the pharmacy service (i.e. specimen collection, handling of self-collected specimen, or point-of-care testing) must be identified in the prescriber field on the claim submitted for payment through the HNS using the PINs identified below.
- Only pharmacists are allowed to collect specimens for lab-based PCR testing. Please see question 17 in the accompanying *Questions and Answers for Pharmacists* document for more information.

- Only pharmacists are allowed to be the ordering clinicians in the COVID-19 test requisition forms for lab-based PCR tests.
- 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).
- The PINs listed in Table 1 below describe the pharmacy services that are eligible for payment. PINs associated with previous COVID-19 testing programs have been discontinued.

Table 1: PINs to support payment of services relating to publicly funded COVID-19 testing

PIN	Description	Total Amount Paid
09858124	<p>Patient Ineligibility Screening Fee</p> <p>Amount paid for screening the individual to determine if they are eligible for pharmacy services related to publicly funded COVID-19 tests (see Patient Eligibility criteria above). <u>This fee can only be billed after screening and once a pharmacy has determined that an individual is ineligible for a publicly funded pharmacy service related to COVID-19 testing.</u></p> <p>Restrictions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only one (1) Screening Fee can be billed per person per day. • This PIN can only be used when an individual is screened as ineligible for a pharmacy service related to publicly funded COVID-19 testing. If an individual is screened as eligible and receives a pharmacy service related to publicly funded COVID-19 testing, a Screening Fee cannot be billed. • Payment for screening an eligible person is provided through other service PINs, as applicable (see below). 	\$20.00
09858144	<p>In-Store Specimen Collection Fee for Lab-Based PCR COVID-19 Test</p> <p>Amount paid includes patient eligibility screening, collection of the specimen through an anterior nasal swab or oral (buccal), completion of the COVID-19 test requisition form, notification of results, documentation requirements and reimbursement for any privately purchased personal protective equipment (PPE) used by the pharmacy.</p> <p>Restrictions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only one (1) fee claim per day for an eligible individual. However, in the event that a self-collected specimen received 	\$42.00

PIN	Description	Total Amount Paid
	<p>from the individual is not viable (i.e. not pass the in-pharmacy quality control check), a second test can be provided and billed on the same day.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Patient Ineligibility Screening Fee cannot be billed in conjunction with this service. • Claims must be billed using the service date (i.e. the date on which the pharmacy service is provided). 	
09858141	<p>At-Home Self-Collected COVID-19 Specimen Handling Fee, including Dispensing of Self-Collection Kit (General)</p> <p>Amount paid includes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assembly of self-collection test kit and kit dispensing to individual, if applicable. • Patient eligibility screening. • Receiving the self-collected COVID-19 specimen from individual and conducting quality control of the specimen collected. • Quality assurance of COVID-19 test requisition form and completion of the ordering clinician's section • Reporting of results (including specimen cancellation/rejections), and documentation requirements. • Reimbursement for any privately purchased personal protective equipment (PPE) used to provide this service. <p>Restrictions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only one (1) fee claim per day for an eligible individual. However, in the event that a self-collected specimen received from the individual is not viable (i.e. not pass the in-pharmacy quality control check), a second test can be provided and billed on the same day. • The PIN cannot be billed at the time of kit assembly or dispensing to patient. The PIN must only be billed upon the completion of the entire service described above. • A Patient Ineligibility Screening Fee cannot be billed in conjunction with this service. • Should a self-collected specimen received from the individual not be viable (i.e. not pass the in-pharmacy quality control check), the PIN may be billed for this service. • Claims must be billed using the service date (i.e. the date on which the pharmacy service is provided). 	\$35.00
09858142	<p>At-Home Self-Collected COVID-19 Specimen Handling Fee (For School Staff and Students)</p> <p>Amount paid includes the following:</p>	\$15.00

PIN	Description	Total Amount Paid
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receiving the self-collected COVID-19 specimen from students and staff who have received a PCR self-collection kit through publicly funded elementary and secondary schools and participating private and First Nations schools. • Conducting quality control of the specimen collected. • Quality assurance of COVID-19 test requisition form and completion of the ordering clinician’s section. • Reporting of results (including specimen cancellation/rejections), and documentation requirements. • Reimbursement for any privately purchased personal protective equipment (PPE) used to provide this service. <p>Restrictions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only one (1) fee claim per day for an eligible individual. However, in the event that a self-collected specimen received from the individual is not viable (i.e. not pass the in-pharmacy quality control check), a second test can be provided and billed on the same day. • The PIN must only be billed upon the completion of the entire service described above. • A Patient Ineligibility Screening Fee cannot be billed in conjunction with this service. • Should a self-collected specimen received from the individual not be viable (i.e. not pass the in-pharmacy quality control check), the PIN may be billed for this service. • Claims must be billed using the service date (i.e. the date on which the pharmacy service is provided). 	
09858143	<p>In-Store Point-of-Care PCR Testing, including Specimen Collection Fee (COVID-19) Amount paid includes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patient eligibility screening. • Specimen collection and performing test in ID NOW™ instrument. • Reporting of results into Mobile Order Result Entry (MORE). and notification of results to individual and Public Health Unit in which the individual resides, as well as related documentation requirements. • Regular device quality-control checks and verification based on manufacturer recommendations. • Reimbursement for any privately purchased personal protective equipment (PPE) used to provide this service. <p>Restriction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only one (1) fee claim per day for an eligible person. 	\$42.00

PIN	Description	Total Amount Paid
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Patient Ineligibility Screening Fee cannot be billed in conjunction with this service. • Claims must be billed using the service date (i.e. the date on which the pharmacy service is provided). • No Transportation Fee may be claimed for conducting the rapid molecular test, as specimen shipping is not required. 	
09858126	<p>Transportation Fee (COVID-19 Specimen) for Lab-Based PCR Tests</p> <p>Amount paid includes the daily transportation of the specimens (for in-store specimen collection and at-home self-collection for lab-based PCR tests only) from the pharmacy to the designated laboratory including the costs of shipping materials, up to a maximum of \$140 per store per day.</p> <p>Restrictions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The PIN can only be used to bill for the transportation of COVID-19 specimens for lab-based PCR testing (specimens collected in-store or via at-home self collection) • A maximum of one (1) claim per day per store based on actual daily transportation costs, up to a maximum of \$140. • Only actual daily transportation costs (including shipping materials) may be submitted, up to \$140 per day per store. • Claims must be billed using the service date (i.e. the date on which the pharmacy service is provided). • The Transportation PIN cannot be used to bill for shipping specimens for in-store point-of-care PCR tests, as this type of test does not require specimen shipping. <p>Note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not submit a claim for the Transportation Fee under a patient's name. Pharmacists must use the Proxy patient ID 79999 999 93 in place of the health card number. • Pharmacies are responsible for arranging their own transportation to the designated laboratory. Pharmacies are encouraged to exercise fiscal responsibility when determining transportation and packaging arrangements. 	Up to \$140.00

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).

In accordance with Table 1, a PIN is required for all claims.

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"

For the **Transportation Fee** (for all patients):

When submitting a claim for the Transportation Fee, pharmacists must submit the following information:

- First Name: Transport
- Last Name: Fee
- Patient Gender: Leave blank or enter "U" (unknown)
- Patient Date of Birth: Leave blank or enter 20000101
- Proxy patient ID: 79999 999 93
- Intervention codes:

- PS: Professional Care Services
- PB: Name entered is consistent with card
- Valid Pharmacist ID
- Enter PIN: 09858126
- Professional Fee: Actual transportation costs (including shipping materials) – up to \$140 per day for all specimens transported to the designated laboratory for lab-based PCR testing (both specimens collected in-store and specimens self-collected at home and dropped-off at pharmacy).

Note: Do not submit a claim for the Transportation Fee using a patient’s Health card number. Only the above proxy patient ID can be used.

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 testing services 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 include, at a minimum:

- To support claims for the **Patient Ineligibility Screening Fee** for the COVID-19 test, a copy of the screening form used is acceptable which would include:
 - Documentation of agreement by the patient for the assessment (e.g., patient signature or verbal consent)
 - Documentation of rationale for patient’s ineligibility for a pharmacy service related to publicly funded COVID-19 testing (see Patient Eligibility criteria above)
 - Patient identifiers, including patient name, date of birth, address, phone, and Ontario health card # (if applicable).
 - The date and time of the screening.
 - The name of the pharmacist providing the service.
- To support claims for the **In-Store Specimen Collection Fee for Lab-Based PCR Testing**, pharmacists must provide an indication that the specimen collection was conducted according to the program protocols established by the Ministry and in accordance with OCP policy as in the following list:
 - Documentation of patient consent (e.g., patient signature or verbal consent)

- Documentation that shows the patient was screened for symptoms and eligibility.
- Test requisition form COVID-19 swab sample completed (including Investigation Number, if applicable).
- Patient identifiers, including patient name, date of birth, address, phone, and Ontario health card # (if applicable).
- The date and time the service was provided.
- The name and signature of the pharmacist who collected the specimen along with a copy of the completed test requisition form and a copy of the results with documentation that they were communicated to the patient if positive and/or if the patient was unable to access the results online.
- Documentation that shows PPE was donned (e.g., surgical mask (i.e., medical mask), gloves, face shield/goggles, gown) according to guidelines.
- Invoices for specimen collection kit and tracking of specimen collection (if available).
- To support claims for the **At-Home Self-Collected COVID-19 Specimen Handling Fee, including Dispensing of Self-Collection Kit (General)**
 - Documentation that shows the patient was screened for symptoms and eligibility.
 - Patient identifiers, including patient name, date of birth, address, phone, and Ontario health card # (if applicable).
 - The date and time the service was completed (i.e. when the specimen was dropped off at the pharmacy by the patient and prepared for transport).
 - The name and signature of the pharmacist who is the ordering clinician with a copy of the completed test requisition form.
 - A copy of the results with documentation that they were communicated to the patient if positive and/or if the patient was unable to access the results online and/or if the patient's specimens were rejected or cancelled.
 - Documentation that the self-collected specimens received at the pharmacy underwent quality control checks, including documentation that shows reasons for why a specimen did not pass the in-pharmacy quality control check, and confirmation that the individual was asked to be re-tested.
 - Documentation that shows PPE was donned (e.g., surgical mask (i.e., medical mask), gloves, face shield/goggles, gown) according to guidelines.
 - Invoices for specimen collection kit and tracking of specimen collection (if available).
- To support claims for the **At-Home Self-Collected COVID-19 Specimen Handling Fee (For School Staff and Students)**
 - Patient identifiers, including patient name, date of birth, address, phone, and Ontario health card # (if applicable).
 - The date and time the service was completed (i.e. when the specimen was dropped off at the pharmacy by the patient and prepared for transport).
 - The name and signature of the pharmacist who is the ordering clinician with a copy of the completed test requisition form.
 - A copy of the results with documentation that they were communicated to the

- patient if positive and/or if the patient was unable to access the results online and/or if the patient's specimens were rejected or cancelled.
 - Documentation that the self-collected specimens received at the pharmacy underwent quality control checks, including documentation that shows reasons for why a specimen did not pass the in-pharmacy quality control check, and confirmation that the individual was asked to be re-tested.
 - Documentation that shows PPE was donned (e.g., surgical mask (i.e., medical mask), gloves, face shield/goggles, gown) according to guidelines.
 - Invoices for specimen collection kit and tracking of specimen collection (if available).
- To support claims for **the In-Store Point-of-Care PCR Testing Fee (COVID-19)**:
 - Documentation of patient consent (e.g., patient signature or verbal consent).
 - Documentation that shows the patient was screened for symptoms and eligibility.
 - Patient identifiers, including patient name, date of birth, address, phone, and Ontario health card # (if applicable).
 - The date and time the service was provided.
 - The name and signature of the pharmacist who administered the test along with a copy of the results with documentation that they reported into MORE and disclosed to the Public Health Unit in which the patient resides (if positive), and communicated to the patient if positive and/or if the patient was unable to access the results online.
 - Documentation that shows PPE was donned (e.g., surgical mask (i.e., medical mask), gloves, face shield/goggles, gown) according to guidelines.
 - Invoices for point-of-care PCR test components.
- To support claims for the **Transportation Fee**:
 - Proof of transport of the collected specimens to the designated lab (e.g., shipping invoice with details of date/time shipped, by whom, number of tests collected, etc.) and proof of transportation costs (i.e. costs of shipping and shipping materials). Claim amounts must correspond to amounts on the invoices.

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