

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

January 17, 2022

*This is a further update to the Executive Officer (EO) Notice: Publicly Funded COVID-19 Testing Services in Ontario Pharmacies and accompanying Questions and Answers (Qs & As) dated December 31, 2021. Updates to the EO Notice and Q & As were previously made on November 27, December 1, 2021, and December 31, 2021. This latest update replaces those previous updates and will be reflected in new consolidated versions of the EO Notice and Qs & As available on the ministry's website at a later date. Until the new consolidated versions are published, this update shall be deemed to replace the patient eligibility information in the EO Notice and Q&As dated November 18, 2021.*

For clarity, this update constitutes 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.

**Update: Effective January 17, 2022:**

## Patient Eligibility

Pharmacy services related to publicly funded COVID-19 testing may be offered to, or arranged for, individuals described as eligible or recommended for testing in the attached COVID-19 Integrated Testing & Case, Contact and Outbreak Management Interim Guidance: Omicron Surge (the "Guidance"), which includes but is not limited to<sup>1</sup> the groups of persons listed below. In the event of a conflict between this update document and the Guidance, the Guidance applies.

- [Symptomatic](#)<sup>2</sup> people who fall into one of the following groups:
  - Patient-facing healthcare workers

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<sup>1</sup> This list may change from time to time. Please review the Ministry's attached COVID-19 Integrated Testing & Case, Contact and Outbreak Management Interim Guidance: Omicron Surge for the most up to date eligibility criteria.

<sup>2</sup> Symptomatic is defined as having the symptoms or signs that require COVID-19 testing, as outlined in the [COVID-19 Reference Document for Symptoms](#).

- Staff, volunteers, residents/inpatients, essential care providers, and visitors in highest risk settings
  - Highest risk settings include: hospital (including complex continuing care facilities and paramedic services) and congregate living settings, including Long-Term Care, retirement homes, First Nation elder care lodges, group homes, shelters, hospices and correctional institutions
- Household members of workers in highest risk settings
- Temporary Foreign Workers in congregate living settings
- Patients seeking emergency medical care, at the discretion of the treating clinician
- Outpatients for whom COVID-19 treatment is being considered, including:
  - [Immunocompromised individuals](#) not expected to mount an adequate immune response from COVID-19 vaccination or SARS-CoV-2 infection, regardless of vaccination status.
  - Individuals who are not fully vaccinated and at highest risk of severe disease (anyone aged  $\geq 70$  years or  $\geq 60$  years who is Indigenous and/or has additional risk factors)<sup>3</sup>
- Pregnant people
- People who are underhoused or homeless
- First responders, including fire, police and paramedics
- Elementary and secondary students and education staff who have received a PCR self-collection kit through their school
- Symptomatic/asymptomatic people:
  - From First Nation, Inuit, and Métis communities and individuals travelling into these communities for work
  - On admission/transfer to or from hospital or congregate living setting
  - Close contacts and people in the context of confirmed or suspected outbreaks in highest risk<sup>4</sup> settings as directed by the local public health unit
  - Individuals, and one accompanying caregiver, with written prior approval for out-of-country medical services from the General Manager, OHIP
  - Asymptomatic testing in hospital, long-term care, retirement homes and other congregate living settings and institutions as per provincial guidance and/or Directives, or as directed by public health units.

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<sup>3</sup> Risk factors include obesity (BMO  $\geq 30$ ), dialysis or stage 5 kidney disease (eGFR  $< 15$  mL/min/1.73m<sup>2</sup>), diabetes, cerebral palsy, intellectual disability of any severity, sickle cell disease, receiving active cancer treatment, solid organ or stem cell transplant recipients or other important risk factors at the opinion of the physician.

<sup>4</sup> Highest risk settings include hospitals (including complex continuing care facilities and paramedic services) and congregate living settings, including Long-Term Care, retirement homes, First Nation elder care lodges, group homes, shelters, hospices, and correctional institutions. All other settings would be considered non-highest risk.

**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