

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

January 25, 2023

This is an update to the Executive Officer (EO) Notice: Publicly Funded COVID-19 Testing Services in Ontario Pharmacies and accompanying Questions and Answers for Pharmacists and Patients (Qs & As) dated October 6, 2022. This update modifies the patient eligibility criteria in the EO Notice and Qs & As dated October 6, 2022.

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.

Patient Eligibility

Pharmacy services related to publicly funded COVID-19 testing are permitted for individuals who fall within the priority groups eligible for polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests (laboratory-based and rapid point-of-care tests) ¹ in the [COVID-19 Provincial Testing Guidance](#) (the “[Guidance](#)”), including the groups of persons listed below. In the event of a conflict between this document and the Guidance, the Guidance prevails. ²

Symptomatic people who fall into one or more of the following groups:

- People aged 60 years of age and older
- People aged 18 years of age and older who have one or more [comorbidity that puts them at higher risk of severe COVID-19 disease](#)
- People aged 18 years of age and older who are unvaccinated or have not completed their primary vaccine series
- People aged 18 years of age and older who completed their primary vaccine series AND received their last COVID-19 vaccine dose more than 6 months ago AND have not had a SARS-CoV-2 infection in the past 6 months

¹ The [COVID-19 Provincial Testing Guidance](#) refers to these tests as laboratory-based and rapid molecular tests.

² Please review the Ministry’s [COVID-19 Provincial Testing Guidance](#) for the most up to date eligibility criteria.

- People who are immunocompromised
- Pregnant people
- Patients seeking emergency medical care or other outpatients for whom a diagnostic test may guide clinical management, at the discretion of the treating clinician
- Patient-facing healthcare workers
- Staff, volunteers, residents/inpatients, essential care providers, and visitors in highest risk settings
 - Highest risk settings include: hospitals (including complex continuing care facilities and paramedic services), and congregate living settings³ with medically and socially vulnerable individuals, including, but not limited to long-term care homes, retirement homes, First Nation elder care lodges, group homes, shelters, hospices, correctional institutions, and hospital schools.
- Household members of staff in highest risk settings and patient-facing health care workers
- Home and community care workers
- International Agriculture Workers in congregate living settings
- People who are underhoused or experiencing homelessness
- First responders, including fire, police and paramedics

Symptomatic or asymptomatic people who fall within one or more of the following groups:

- Individuals who are from a First Nation, Inuit, Métis community, and/or who self-identify as First Nation, Inuit, and Métis, and their household members
- Individuals travelling into First Nation, Inuit, Métis communities for work
- On admission/transfer to or from hospital or congregate living setting⁴
- People in the context of confirmed or suspected outbreaks in highest risk 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, Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP)

³ See the COVID-19 Guidance: Long-Term Care Homes, Retirement Homes, and Other Congregate Living Settings for Public Health Units . *People in each of these groups may be eligible for COVID-19 treatment if they test positive, based on clinical criteria including risk factors and vaccination status.

⁴ While people on admission/transfer are eligible for molecular testing, the decision of whether to test should be based on clinical, epidemiological, and/or organizational factors.

- Any patient with a scheduled surgical procedure requiring a general anaesthetic 24-48 hours prior to procedure date
- Newborns born to people with confirmed COVID-19 at the time of birth within 24 hours of delivery, with a repeat test at 48 hours after birth if baseline test is negative, or if the parental test results are pending at the time of discharge
- People 24-48 hours prior to treatment for cancer or prior to hemodialysis, at the discretion of the treating clinician
- Staff of highest risk settings who, within the last 10 days, have had close contact with an individual with symptoms compatible with COVID-19 or an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19, for the purposes of facilitating return to work, as directed by sector-specific guidance or Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) or Occupational Health staff.

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