

Questions and Answers for Patients: Specimen Collection for COVID-19 Testing of At-Risk Asymptomatic Persons through Ontario Pharmacies - Updated February 19, 2021

This Questions and Answers document provides information to patients on the availability of Specimen Collection for Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) COVID-19 Laboratory Testing of At-Risk Asymptomatic Persons through Ontario pharmacies.

Effective September 25, 2020, the Government of Ontario is publicly funding the collection of specimens for PCR COVID-19 laboratory testing for at-risk asymptomatic persons at select participating pharmacies in Ontario.

1. Who can get a PCR COVID-19 laboratory test through specimen collection at a pharmacy?

For the current eligibility criteria, please see the *Updated Executive Officer Notice: Specimen Collection for COVID-19 Testing of At-Risk Asymptomatic Persons through Ontario Pharmacies: Eligibility Criteria* posted on the ministry's [website](#).

2. How do I know if I belong to an at-risk group targeted for COVID-19 testing?

At-risk populations are identified based on current public health guidelines and considerations and may change as the pandemic situation evolves. Please see the *Updated Executive Officer Notice: Specimen Collection for COVID-19 Testing of At-Risk Asymptomatic Persons through Ontario Pharmacies: Eligibility Criteria* posted on the ministry's [website](#) for up-to-date information on who is eligible for these publicly funded pharmacy services.

3. Where can I obtain these pharmacy services?

You can locate a participating pharmacy at: <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/assessment-centre-locations/>. Please call ahead to the pharmacy to book an appointment or to find out their procedures.

When you go to the pharmacy, a valid Ontario health card is recommended. However, an Ontario health card is not required to receive a publicly funded PCR test. Those who provide an Ontario health card (green card) will be able to access their test results online via the [ministry's access portal](#).

4. What type of test is being offered through specimen collection at pharmacies?

For the publicly funded PCR COVID-19 laboratory testing program, pharmacists will be performing specimen collection using a Public Health Ontario validated specimen collection method, such as an anterior nasal swab or throat swab.

For more information about specimen collection, please refer to Public Health Ontario's [website](#).

5. Are pharmacists prepared to collect specimens? What quality standards will be followed?

Pharmacists should be familiar with specimen collection for PCR COVID-19 laboratory testing. There are many education and training materials available to pharmacists through Public Health Ontario and the Ontario Pharmacists Association. The Ontario College of Pharmacists has also issued a Guidance document for pharmacists to follow. All training materials and practice guidelines have been developed in accordance with the Ontario College of Pharmacists, Ontario Health, Public Health Ontario and the Ministry of Health to ensure quality and appropriateness.

6. I require a negative COVID-19 test prior to travelling out of the country, where can I get tested?

Effective December 11, 2020, individuals requesting a COVID-19 test for international travel clearance are not eligible for a **publicly funded** COVID-19 test in Ontario, including related specimen collection services at a participating pharmacy. You may be directed to a private testing facility such as a travel clinic.

7. What happens after the specimen collection at the pharmacy?

The pharmacist will provide details on the process before the specimen collection begins, as well as answer any other questions you may have.

The specimen collected at the pharmacy is sent to a laboratory for testing. If your test results indicate you *have* COVID-19 (i.e. a positive test result), the pharmacy will contact you to notify you of your positive test result. Your local public health unit will also follow up with you to inform you of your test result and to begin contact tracing.

If your test results indicate you *do not* have COVID-19 (i.e. a negative test result), and you presented a green Ontario health card number at the pharmacy, you will not be contacted. Patients who provided their green Ontario health card number will be able to access their test results by accessing the [online ministry portal](#).

Note that if you do not have an Ontario health card number or presented a red and white health card number, the pharmacy will contact you with your results (regardless of whether you tested positive or negative).

8. Where can I get more information?

For more information related to COVID-19 and the service of swab tests, talk to your health care provider, take a [COVID-19 self-assessment](#) or visit the following webpage: www.publichealthontario.ca/en/diseases-and-conditions/infectious-diseases/respiratory-diseases/novel-coronavirus/public-resources

To find a participating pharmacy, check out the [online Ontario assessment centre location finder](#) or visit <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/assessment-centre-locations/>