



Coronavirus COVID-19

BC Centre for Disease Control | BC Ministry of Health



COVID-19: Viral Testing Guidelines for British Columbia

September 28, 2022

These testing guidelines are meant to provide guidance on recommendations for COVID-19 testing. **This testing guidance does not replace the need for clinical judgment**, which remains critical in determining whether a COVID-19 test should be offered to a patient. Health-care providers should also apply the principles of equity, cultural safety and humility, and consider contextual factors, such as access to health-care services, personal and community factors, and systemic racism.

COVID-19 testing is not recommended for adults and children who do not have symptoms compatible with COVID-19. Symptoms compatible with COVID-19 include:

- Fever or chills
- Cough (either new, or worsening/exacerbation of chronic cough)
- Loss or change of sense or smell or taste
- Shortness of breath
- Sore throat
- Loss of appetite
- Extreme fatigue or tiredness
- Headache
- Body or muscle aches
- Runny nose
- Sneezing
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea

COVID-19-like symptoms are generally non-specific and, when appropriate, testing for other infections may need to be considered.

COVID-19 Testing Recommendations

- 1. COVID-19 testing (SARS-CoV-2) is recommended for people who meet both criteria:**
 - a) Have a new or worsening symptoms compatible with COVID-19, and
 - b) Where COVID-19 testing is clinically indicated (that is, where a positive result would impact treatment of care), such as for hospitalized people of any age, pregnant people, and people who are [eligible for treatment](#).

A PCR test may be preferred in specific circumstances such as for variant surveillance. A PCR test is indicated for testing of patients in acute care settings.



Positive rapid antigen test (RAT) results are acceptable for initiating treatment and no confirmatory testing is required for outpatients. If a RAT is negative and clinical suspicion remains high, patients may repeat a RAT or clinicians can order PCR testing.

2. Testing recommended by medical health officers in high-risk settings or as part of a public health investigation

Testing is indicated when it changes either individual or community management. Your local medical health officer may issue region-specific recommendations based on epidemiology, vaccination rates or access to health services.

Medical health officers may also recommend testing as part of public health investigations. This may include testing of asymptomatic people who are part of a public health investigation of a case, cluster or an outbreak.

Additional Guidance

1. People who have symptoms compatible with COVID-19 who do not meet the above COVID-19 testing recommendations can use a rapid COVID-19 test.

This may be especially important for communities with difficulty accessing testing (and secondary or tertiary care) such as rural, remote, and isolated or Indigenous communities and work-camps, and for Indigenous people living in urban settings. For more information about point-of-care testing for rural, remote, First Nations and Indigenous Communities, please refer to the [BCCDC website](#).

2. Additional guidance for children

All children who are suspected of having [multisystem inflammatory syndrome \(MIS-C\)](#) should also be tested. Infants less than three months of age who are febrile or who have suspected COVID-19 should be assessed by a health-care provider. For more information on the diagnosis and management of COVID-19, please refer to the [BCCDC website](#).

3. Testing for travel purposes

In B.C., testing is **not** available through the provincial health-care system for screening related to travel. The exception is people requiring testing for medically necessary travel (for example unvaccinated people requiring travel for medical reasons from remote communities).

4. Additional guidance for health-care workers

PCR testing is no longer recommended for all health care workers, first responders, staff and residents in congregate settings unless they meet other criteria for testing. People with symptoms compatible of COVID-19 may use a RAT if they wish.

Specimen Requirements

Please refer to the [BCCDC Public Health Laboratory eLab Handbook](#) under COVID-19 virus for specimen requirements

