

Date:	25 October 2022
To:	All Northern Health Clinicians and Laboratories
From:	Ally King, Microbiology Quality Resource Technologist Dr. Kamran Azar, Medical Director NH Laboratories Dr. Randi Woodbeck, UHNBC Pathologist Dr. Miguel Imperial, Medical Microbiologist
Re:	2022-2023 Respiratory Season Test Utilization and Ordering Guideline

During the 2022-2023 respiratory season, Northern Health microbiology labs will be performing multiplexed testing and reporting for influenza A, influenza B, RSV and SARS-CoV-2. Respiratory testing is recommended for individuals:

- who are pregnant,
- reside in a Long-Term care (LTC) facility,
- are part of an outbreak investigation,
- who are hospitalized or ill enough to be hospitalized,
- aged <5 years,
- for whom antiviral treatment would be indicated¹.

This approach aligns with the [BCCDC PHL testing guideline](#) for the respiratory season. The preferred sample type for respiratory testing is a nasopharyngeal (NP) swab. Saline gargle samples will be tested for SARS-CoV-2 only as this sample type has not been validated for Influenza A/B & RSV testing.

If initial respiratory testing is negative and further investigation is required, a full respiratory panel can be requested based on compatible clinical findings. These include children with symptoms of a respiratory infection who need admission or are immunocompromised, and adults who are immunocompromised or requiring critical care. Please request a respiratory NAAT panel and provide a relevant history and physician signature on the requisition. Note that recent vaccination with a live attenuated influenza vaccine such as FluMist® may cause positive influenza results on nucleic acid testing platforms.

Current testing methods at Northern Health Laboratories are able to detect a variety of respiratory viruses and their variants, but cannot differentiate them. As such, a proportion of positive samples are referred out to BCCDC for whole genome sequencing (WGS) or subtyping.

Respiratory testing is performed by laboratory microbiology departments during regular operational hours; refer to your local testing site for hours of operation. Respiratory multiplex testing is performed on a rapid platform with an expected turnaround time of less than 24 hours.

For further information or questions, please contact Lisette Vienneau, Regional Director of Diagnostic Services at Lisette.vienneau@northernhealth.ca

¹[Ammi Canada Guidance on the use of antiviral drugs for influenza](#)