

LABORATORY SERVICES DURING CURRENT ALERT LEVEL 2

13 August 2020

With the recent change in alert levels, we have experienced a huge increase in COVID testing volumes and we are not able to continue 'business as usual' in our microbiology and molecular laboratories.

Starting immediately, we will put in place the following restrictions. We are relying on referrers to request when only absolutely required. If we continue to receive normal levels of micro/molecular tests, our turn-around times for COVID testing will extend.

Microbiology test processing restrictions

Specimen type / test	When appropriate to request / send
Throat swabs	Only on patients with risk factors for rheumatic fever (see Heart Foundation guidelines)
Sputum samples	Community – almost never Hospital – pneumonia
Wound swabs	Community – where clearly an infection present and empiric therapy has failed Hospital – necrotizing fasciitis or other severe clinical infection
Urine	Community – symptomatic and empiric therapy has failed Hospital – presenting symptomatic and unwell (i.e. not part of routine screening in ED with patient presenting with abdominal pain etc.)
STI screen	Please delay screening tests Do not send as part of smear collection
Vaginal swabs	Only symptomatic where empiric therapy for Candida has failed or history of BV / reason to suspect BV
Mycology	Will only be performed in BAL specimens, immunocompromised patients
Molecular tests (HCV RNA, HBV DNA, HIV RNA, VZV, HSV, enteric pathogens)	These will be reviewed and may be declined. Please delay requesting viral loads if possible. Please do not send in HSV / VZV swabs for PCR from the community unless related to preventing neonatal HSV infection or if there is diagnostic uncertainty in an immunocompromised patient. Please avoid sending faecal samples for PCR if possible.
Faecal parasitology	Please avoid sending if possible.

In addition, please do not send patients to our collection centres for routine screening tests that could wait a few weeks.

We continue to ask that **clinical details are routinely provided on all requests for laboratory services**. Not providing clinical details may have a negative impact on the likelihood of the tests being processed.

This is an evolving situation and further notifications will follow. We appreciate your understanding and assistance.

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