

COVID-19

INFORMATION UPDATE



May 21, 2020

To: All IH Medical Practitioners, IH Laboratory, Divisions of Family Practice
From: Joanne Isber, IH Laboratory Program Director
Dr. Launny Lowden, Interim IH Laboratory Medical Director

Re: Surge in Outpatient Testing, Increased Wait Times for IH Labs

During the past several weeks, IH Laboratory has maintained collections for outpatients in 49 of its 52 collection sites. This is an incredible feat as both private and public laboratories across the province completely shut down many of their collection facilities.

As B.C. moves forward into the recovery phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is expected that our lab collection sites will see a surge of patients as routine bloodwork resumes. Due to the pandemic physical distancing and cleaning protocols, it is anticipated that wait-times will be elevated.

At the current time:

- Set hours of operation remain in place for immunocompromised or vulnerable patients at each of our collection sites.
- Hours of operation can be found at [IH Outpatient Laboratory Temporary Hours](#).
- Where human resource capacity is available, patient navigators are in place to assist patients and direct physical distancing restrictions.
- Temporary manual appointment booking is being implemented at sites where patient volumes are extremely high.
- New processes are in development to help mitigate wait-times, including an [online booking system](#).

What you can do to help:

- Communicate to patients that pandemic restrictions are still in place and that a potential increase in wait-times may occur.
- Continue to limit orders for non-urgent bloodwork throughout the recovery phase when possible to prevent overwhelming the system.
- **Avoid ordering fasting bloodwork** and suggest that patients avoid early morning collection. This will help distribute patients evenly throughout the day and mitigate bottlenecks early in the morning, as patients often assume that all bloodwork requires fasting.
 - Remember that fasting lipid levels are *almost never necessary*, and that HbA1c may often be used in place of a fasting glucose.