

COVID-19

INFORMATION UPDATE



June 10, 2020

To: All IH Medical Staff and Community Physicians
From: Joanne Isber, Program Director, IH Laboratory Services
Dr. Launny Lowden, Interim Medical Director, IH Laboratory Services

Re: Ensuring Outpatient Lab Safety: Temporary Lab Booking System and Other Safety Measures

Over the last several months, Interior Health outpatient laboratory services have been limited to urgent and time-sensitive patient collections due to our focus on the COVID-19 pandemic response.

As we begin to re-open our collection locations, we are introducing appropriate safety measures for both patients and employees. This includes implementing a temporary booking system for blood collections at designated sites. Patients will now be able to call in locations to book an appointment.

Guidance for Physicians & Nurse Practitioners

- Please review the information below with your patients.
- Discuss any special collection requirements, such as fasting, time sensitive or ECG.
- Inform the patient if you are faxing their requisition directly to the collection site of choice.
- Please ensure you are faxing the patient requisition to the correct location.
- Patients do not need to call the lab prior to their visit to ensure the fax is received. The laboratory will not confirm received faxes.
- We are not accepting emailed requisitions at this time. Requisitions must be given in a hard copy directly to patient or faxed to the applicable laboratory location. Patients may be provided with emailed requisitions, but it is their responsibility to then print this requisition out prior to coming to the laboratory.
- Site-specific information for [Outpatient Lab temporary hours](#) is available on our IH public website under the Find Us section.

Important Information for Lab Outpatients

Patients may be concerned about returning to the hospital or a health-care clinical setting; however, please know we are committed to providing a safe care environment.

The following safety measures are now considered before, during, and after patient visits:

- **Masks** – Patients are encouraged to wear their own mask and distance themselves two metres (or 6 feet) from other individuals.
- **Caregiver Support** – A limit of one caregiver to accompany the patient into the laboratory if required.
- **Faxed Requisitions** – We are unable to check whether the faxed requisition has arrived – patients are asked not to call the local laboratory with this question.
- **Supporting Vulnerable Populations and the Immunocompromised** – We are taking several proactive steps to ensure these patients are safe by providing them with a medical grade mask,

isolating people who are at high risk, and expediting their service. Designated collection times are in place and available on the website (see [Outpatient Lab Temporary Hours](#)).

- **Patient Screening Navigators** – Prior to entering the waiting area, all visitors will be asked to answer a series of health questions related to COVID-19.
- **Physical Distancing** – The number of people in the waiting room may be limited to ensure appropriate physical distancing is maintained. Patients who are assessed as having no symptoms or risk of illness will be able to enter the waiting area dependent on space availability.
- **Cleaning and Disinfection** – Our sites have implemented enhanced cleaning and decontamination practices as per provincial safety guidelines.
- **Personal Protective Equipment** – Following advice and recommendations from the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), our employees will continue to wear personal protective equipment for droplet precautions, which includes eye protection, masks, gloves, and gowns.