

## COVID-19: Updated Information for GPs and Community Health Practitioners (new information in red)

### Key Points

- Test for COVID-19 in patients with fever, acute respiratory infection or sudden onset of loss of sense of smell or taste.
- Patients with sudden onset of runny nose, blocked nose (congestion), muscle pain, joint pain, diarrhoea, nausea, vomiting or loss of appetite can be tested for COVID-19 if no alternate cause is apparent.
- Use contact and droplet precautions during consultations with patients who have potential or confirmed COVID-19 and for collecting specimens from these patients.
- Specimen collection for COVID-19 testing can be done by GPs, or at COVID-19 Testing Clinics, or at some pathology collection centres.

### Testing criteria for COVID-19

#### Test all patients who meet the suspect case definition:

- Fever ( $\geq 37.5^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) or history of fever (e.g. night sweats, chills) **OR** acute respiratory infection (e.g. cough, shortness of breath, sore throat) **OR** loss of sense of smell or taste

#### AND

- Has at least one epidemiological risk factor in the 14 days prior to illness onset:
  - Close contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case; OR
  - International travel; OR
  - People who have been in a [geographical area of risk](#) within Australia; OR
  - People who have been in a setting where there is a confirmed COVID-19 case; OR
  - Workers supporting COVID-19 quarantine and isolation services; OR
  - International border staff; OR
  - Air and maritime crew; OR
  - Healthcare, aged care or residential care workers and staff with potential COVID-19 patient contact.

#### In addition to the suspect case definition, test anyone who meets the following clinical criteria :

- Fever ( $\geq 37.5^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) or history of fever (e.g. night sweat, chills) in the absence of a clear alternative cause, such as a urinary tract infection or cellulitis; **OR**
- Acute respiratory infection (e.g. shortness of breath, cough, sore throat); **OR**
- Sudden onset of loss of sense of smell or taste.

Patients with sudden onset of runny nose, blocked nose (congestion), muscle pain, joint pain, diarrhoea, nausea, vomiting or loss of appetite can be tested for COVID-19 in the absence of fever or respiratory symptoms if no alternate cause for these symptoms is apparent.

Testing of asymptomatic individuals is not generally recommended. However, it is ACT Health policy that individuals in quarantine undergo “exit testing” on day 10-12 of their quarantine period, even if asymptomatic. In addition, some individuals may be asked by ACT Health (or another public health authority such as NSW Health) to be tested upon entry to quarantine.

## Testing of patients who have received a COVID-19 vaccine

Continue to test for COVID-19 in patients who have been vaccinated if they meet the case definition and/or clinical criteria listed above.

In the initial post-vaccine period, patients should also be tested:

- If they develop respiratory symptoms such as sore throat, cough, runny or blocked nose, loss of taste or smell, or breathlessness, as these symptoms are not likely to be caused by the vaccine.
- If they develop other symptoms including fatigue, headache, muscle or joint pain, chills or fever, in the absence of respiratory symptoms, that are severe, or last longer than 48 hours after vaccination.
- If they develop a fever within 48 hours after vaccination and have at least one epidemiological risk factor (see above) in the 14 days prior to illness onset.

If patients present with symptoms following COVID-19 vaccination, consider whether they meet the criteria for reportable adverse events following immunisation (AEFI) and report accordingly. Refer to the ACT Health factsheet on [COVID-19 vaccine enhanced surveillance and AEFI reporting for healthcare professionals](#) or call the ACT Health Immunisation Unit on (02) 5124 9800 for more information.

## Notification to Communicable Disease Control (CDC), ACT Health

---

- Notify any confirmed COVID-19 cases to CDC, ACT Health by calling (02) 5124 6209 during business hours or (02) 9962 4155 after hours.
- There is no requirement to notify CDC of patients who are undergoing COVID-19 testing. However, clinicians are welcome to discuss any case with CDC at any time.

## Isolate and apply infection control precautions

---

- Provide patients with acute respiratory symptoms a surgical mask to put on and separate them from other patients without these symptoms by at least 2 metres or direct them to a single room with the door closed.
- Assess patients with potential COVID-19 (including patients who are in quarantine) in a well-ventilated single room, using contact and droplet transmission precautions. This includes a surgical mask, disposable gown, gloves, and eye protection (goggles or face shield). Refer to ACT Health [advice on donning and doffing PPE](#).
- Wear new PPE for each patient.
- Use contact and droplet precautions while collecting specimens from patients undergoing testing for COVID-19. For further details, refer to [ACT Health Specimen Collection guidance](#).
- Following the consultation and/or specimen collection, room surfaces should be wiped clean with detergent and disinfectant by a person wearing gloves, gown and surgical mask.

## Arrange COVID-19 testing

---

- To collect specimens for COVID-19 testing:

- A combined throat and bilateral deep nasal swab is recommended for swabbing the upper respiratory tract. Refer to [ACT Health Specimen Collection guidance](#) for more details.
- A combined throat and nasopharyngeal swab can be collected using an appropriate swab if indicated (e.g. if also testing for *Mycoplasma pneumoniae* or *Bordetella pertussis*).
- Testing may be triaged according to information on the pathology request form. Please include detailed information about any travel history, contact with confirmed COVID-19 cases, and/or links to high risk settings (e.g. healthcare settings, aged care or other residential care facilities, correctional facilities etc.), as well as the patient's symptoms.
- Send specimens to your preferred pathology provider. Results will generally be available within 48 hours; however, in some cases results may take longer.
- Send specimens via courier if possible. If necessary, patients can be asked to drop off their own specimens at a pathology collection centre. They must be advised to wear a mask.
- Alternatively, patients can be referred to a COVID-19 Testing Clinic or a suitable pathology collection centre for specimen collection. Details of all COVID-19 Testing Clinics and suitable pathology collection centres are provided at the end of this document.
- When travelling to a COVID-19 Testing Clinic or pathology collection centre, the patient should ideally use private transport. If they need to use public transport, rideshare or taxi, they should wear a mask (if they have one) and practice physical distancing.
- To attend drive through testing at EPIC or Kambah, patients must be driving or be a passenger in a registered motor vehicle or motorbike. They cannot be accessed from public transport or on foot.
- It is the responsibility of the clinician ordering COVID-19 testing to ensure that the result is followed up and communicated to the patient (if negative) or to CDC (if positive).
- Asymptomatic individuals cannot be tested at ACT Government testing clinics unless a public health authority (e.g. ACT Health or NSW Health) has directed them to have a COVID-19 test.
- Asymptomatic individuals cannot be tested at GP Respiratory Clinics.
- Asymptomatic patients requiring clearance testing (e.g. for permission to board an international flight to certain countries) should be sent to a private pathology collection centre with a pathology request form. They may be charged for their test in these circumstances.

## Provide advice for patients while awaiting COVID-19 test results

---

- Anyone with clinical symptoms who is tested for COVID-19 must stay at home until they receive a negative COVID-19 test result, **and** their symptoms have resolved.
- Individuals who were already in quarantine prior to being tested (e.g. due to recent travel or close contact with a known COVID-19 case) must still complete their full quarantine period as advised by ACT Health, even if they have a negative COVID-19 test result.
- A factsheet for people who have been tested for COVID-19 is available on the [Chief Health Officer alerts page](#).

## More information

---

<https://www.health.act.gov.au/health-professionals/chief-health-officer-alerts>

<https://www.covid19.act.gov.au/>

Dr Miranda Harris

For Dr Vanessa Johnston  
A/g ACT Chief Health Officer

22 March 2021

### Accessibility

If you have difficulty reading a standard printed document and would like an alternative format, please phone 13 22 81.



If English is not your first language and you need the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS), please call 13 14 50.

For further accessibility information, visit: [www.health.act.gov.au/accessibility](http://www.health.act.gov.au/accessibility)

[www.health.act.gov.au](http://www.health.act.gov.au) | Phone: 132281 | © Australian Capital Territory, Canberra March 2021

**COVID-19 Testing Clinics (ACT Pathology) – no appointment required**

CENTRE	ADDRESS	MON – FRI	WEEKEND
Weston Creek Walk-in Centre Respiratory Assessment Clinic	24 Parkinson St, Weston	0730–2200	0730–2200
COVID-19 Drive Through at Exhibition Park in Canberra (EPIC)*	Flemington Rd and Northbourne Ave, Mitchell	0930–1700	0930–1700
COVID-19 Drive Through at Kambah*	Jenke Circuit, Kambah	0930–1700	0930–1700

**GP Respiratory Clinics**

CENTRE	ADDRESS	PHONE	MON – FRI	WEEKEND
<a href="#">Your GP@Crace</a> <sup>^</sup> (appointment required)	1/5 Barrata St, Crace	6109 0000	1300–1700	1000–1400 (Sat only)
<a href="#">Lakeview Medical Practice Tuggeranong</a> <sup>^</sup> (appointment required)	1/216 Cowlshaw St, Greenway	6185 1986	1000–1200	Closed
<a href="#">Winnunga Nimmityjah Respiratory Clinic</a> (First Nations people and existing clients only; no appointment required ; please call ahead)	63 Boolimba Cres, Narrabundah	6284 6222	0900–1630	Closed

**Capital Pathology – request form required; please call ahead**

CENTRE	ADDRESS	PHONE	FAX	MON – FRI	WEEKEND
<b>COVID-19 only</b>					
Anketell St Tuggeranong	11 Centrepoint, 175 Anketell St Greenway	6285 9954	6285 9955	0800–1600	Closed
<b>COVID-19 and other tests</b>					
Crace	Unit 6, 3 Baratta St, Crace	6242 0004	6242 0005	0800–1200, 1300–1600	Closed
Holt	Units 1 and 2, 10 Holt Pl, Holt	4247 1258	4247 1259	0800–1600	Closed
O'Connor	Unit 1, Ground Floor, 15 Sargood St, O'Connor	6285 9926	6285 9927	0730–1630	Closed
Woden	Brindabella Specialist Centre, Dann Close, Garran	6281 7277	6232 5104	0730–1930	Sat 0730–1330 Sun 1000–1300

**Laverty Pathology – no request form required; no need to call ahead**

CENTRE	ADDRESS	PHONE	MON – FRI	WEEKEND
<b>COVID-19 only</b>				
Franklin	54 Nullarbor Ave, Franklin	0401 687592	0730–1130	Closed

\* Patients must be driving or a passenger in a registered motor vehicle or motorbike to attend drive-through facilities. They cannot be accessed by public transport or on foot. The COVID-19 Drive Through at Kambah may be closed on wet weather days or during extreme heat.

<sup>^</sup> These clinics will not test any asymptomatic individuals.