



IMPORTANT INFORMATION – PLEASE READ

Microbiology Requesting During COVID-19 Testing Surge

The recent community cases of COVID-19 have caused a huge surge in demand for molecular SARS-CoV-2 testing, approximately 1000 tests per day locally over the past couple of days.

Other microbiology and molecular requests need to be urgently reduced to free up staff and preserve reagents and consumables for this COVID-19 testing. We would ask that all routine microbiology testing is minimised as much as possible. Please note the following in particular:

MOLECULAR (please note that all non-COVID-19 molecular testing will potentially impact on our turnaround times for SARS-CoV-2 testing, as well as using up molecular reagents)

- **Asymptomatic Chlamydia and Gonorrhoea Testing:** Testing should be postponed wherever possible.
- **HSV/VZV and viral eye swabs:** Should only be requested in exceptional clinical cases (e.g. immunocompromise, pregnancy).
- **Faeces:** Please request only if systemic symptoms, risk factors for *Clostridium difficile*, or as part of a public health outbreak investigation.

Please note the turnaround times for non-COVID molecular tests will be prolonged.

BACTERIOLOGY/MYCOLOGY (Reduction in routine bacteriology/mycology testing will free up staff to assist with SARS-CoV-2 testing in the molecular department)

- **Urines:** Please strictly reserve laboratory urine testing to cases of complicated UTI including pregnancy and empiric therapy failure.
- **Superficial skin or wound swabs:** Please restrict to where systemic symptoms are present, or there is empiric therapy failure.
- **Mycology skin scrapings, toe and fingernail clippings:** Testing should be postponed wherever possible.
- **Sputum samples:** Sputum samples from the community setting should be restricted to those with a strong clinical suspicion of moderate/severe pneumonia or infective exacerbations of COPD/bronchiectasis recalcitrant to treatment.
- **Ear swabs:** Please send ear swabs only where systemic or recalcitrant infection is present.

These changes in requesting should be implemented immediately. Thank you for your understanding and assistance at this time. We will send out a further update when COVID-19/SARS-CoV-2 testing volumes settle down.

A reminder too please that test request forms required to be forward to Pathlab after a virtual consult, to please use the dedicated email address requestforms@pathlab.co.nz.

- stating the patient NHI and room the patient will attend in the subject line, and
- ensuring the current phone number for patient is on the form.

With face-to-face appointments, the form can be given to the patient to bring with them.

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CLINICAL UPDATE