



**1<sup>st</sup> September 2020**

## **“Post-Surge” Microbiology Testing during COVID Pandemic**

Thank you for your cooperation during this challenging time. It is very much appreciated as we try and minimise the pressure on our laboratory staff and maintain good turnaround times and test quality for all the assays that we perform.

COVID-19/SARS-CoV-2 test volumes have now settled to some extent from the large test surge that we saw a few weeks ago. However, test numbers remain elevated at approximately 500-600 COVID-19 samples per day and, further surges notwithstanding, are likely to continue at this volume for the foreseeable future.

We can now accept non-urgent microbiology samples into the laboratory, such as Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) screens, and mycological samples from skin and nails. Please refer to the COVID-19 clinical update from 13<sup>th</sup> August as to other testing restrictions which can now be relaxed.

Please be aware that the microbiology laboratory has faced a period of sustained pressure over the past several months. To this end, we ask you to strictly adhere to “choosing wisely” requesting principles. Please consider carefully whether the laboratory request is likely to have a significant impact on patient management before sending a sample to us.

Note that in the event of a further surge in COVID-19/SARS-CoV-2 test numbers, we will be required to re-implement further testing restrictions with immediate effect.

We also thank you for your feedback in the recent questionnaire regarding our requirement for pertinent clinical information. We acknowledge the additional work required by the requestor to include this information. Utilisation of these clinical details by the laboratory optimises test processes and reporting, with the goal of achieving the best possible clinical outcomes for the patients.

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**Please ensure all members of your institution receive a copy of this clinical update.**