



22nd November 2021

IMPORTANT INFORMATION – PLEASE READ

COVID-19 testing surge: Changes to Microbiology Requesting

As you will be acutely aware, COVID-19 has appeared in the Lakes and BOP communities over the past week. This has caused unprecedented demand for COVID testing and at present the local demand outstrips our testing capacity at Pathlab.

We urgently need to reduce routine molecular and microbiology testing for the foreseeable future in order to re-allocate staff and keep turnaround times low for COVID requests.

Testing on the following sample types should be postponed and will **only** be accepted on approval from the clinical microbiologist:

- **Sputum samples for bacterial culture from the community setting**
- **Skin scrapings, toe and fingernail clippings for mycology**

Approval can be requested by phone or email clinicalmicrobiology@pathlab.co.nz

Please also note the following:

- **Sexual Health Screens for chlamydia and gonorrhoea should not be sent on asymptomatic patients** Please detail symptoms on the request form so the sample can be accepted
- **Enteric pathogens:** Please request only if systemic symptoms, risk factors for *Clostridium difficile*, or as part of a public health outbreak investigation
- **Urines:** Please strictly reserve laboratory urine testing to cases of complicated UTI
- **Superficial skin or wound swabs:** Please restrict to where systemic symptoms are present, or there is empiric antibiotic failure
- **Ear swabs:** Ear swabs should only be sent where systemic infection, or ENT specialists involved
- **Throat swabs:** Please restrict to where there are risk factors for rheumatic fever or where the patient is systemically unwell
- **HSV/VZV and viral eye swabs:** Should only be requested in exceptional clinical cases
- **Vaginal swabs:** Should only be sent when empiric therapy for Candida has failed or symptoms strongly suggestive of bacterial vaginosis

These changes in requesting will come into effect immediately and will stay in place for the **remainder of 2021**. Please note turnaround times for non-COVID related testing may be prolonged.

Thank you very much for your understanding and cooperation at this time. It is much appreciated.

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