



28th September 2021

IMPORTANT INFORMATION – PLEASE READ

Microbiology Requesting During COVID-19 Testing Surge

As you will be aware, COVID-19 wastewater testing in Tauranga from 23rd September has produced a positive signal, and extended wastewater testing in the region will occur in the next couple of days to clarify the situation. As a result, we are expecting a large surge in COVID PCR test numbers over the next few days.

Other microbiology and molecular requests need to be urgently reduced in order for us to re-allocate staff for COVID testing. We would ask please that all “routine” testing is minimised as much as possible, at least for the next week. 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

- **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 only be sent in exceptional circumstances.
- **Ear swabs:** Please send ear swabs only where systemic infection is present or ENT specialists have been involved.
- **Throat swabs:** Please restrict to where there are risk factors for rheumatic fever or where the patient is systemically unwell.

These changes in requesting need to be implemented immediately.

Thank you for your understanding and assistance at this time - it is very much appreciated.

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