



September 2021

“Post-Surge” Microbiology Testing during COVID Pandemic

COVID-19/SARS-CoV-2 test volumes have now settled to some extent from the latest test surge due to the community outbreak of the Delta variant. However, COVID test numbers remain elevated and further surges notwithstanding, are likely to continue at increased levels for the foreseeable future.

Normal requesting patterns can now be resumed (including samples for mycobacterial culture following the recent Cyberattack at Waikato Hospital).

We do however ask you to strictly adhere to “Choosing wisely” requesting principles and closely adhere to the clinical detail requirements as outlined on the [Pathlab website](#). 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.

Thank you for your cooperation during this challenging time. Reduced test volumes for non-COVID microbiology testing has allowed us to divert resources and maintain fast turnaround times for COVID PCR testing during the recent testing surge. This 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.

Addendum: For Hospital Staff only- GeneXpert Rapid COVID-19 test supply

A limited but ongoing supply of GeneXpert cartridges for rapid COVID-19 PCR testing has now been secured by Pathlab for use at each of the 4 hospitals (Tauranga, Whakatane, Rotorua and Taupo). These will be used when specifically requested for the following indications:

- Acute admission with COVID-19 symptoms
- Prior to emergency surgery where patient has COVID-19 symptoms
- Prior to urgent transfer of patient between DHBs (where required)
- On approval of the on-call ID specialist/Clinical Microbiologist.

The appropriate clinical details to justify urgent testing must be included on the request form.

Please also write “urgent” on the request.

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