

## *Pathology and Laboratory Medicine Memorandum*

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To: Physicians and Health Service Directors, Central Zone

From: Dr. Todd Hatchette, Chief of Service, Central Zone Microbiology  
Charles Heinstein, Manager, Central Zone Microbiology

Date: Dec 14, 2021

Subject: **Suspension of Microbiology Testing for COVID-19 Fourth Wave**

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Effective immediately, the Microbiology Laboratory at the QEII HSC will enact our business continuity planning due to a significant increase in demand for services related to COVID-19 testing in advance of the Holiday season.

The following services will be suspended until further notice

- Throat swabs for Group A *Streptococcus*
- Routine HSV / VZV swabs for PCR
- Stool testing for viral gastroenteritis
- Oral swabs for fungal culture / stain
- fungal culture for skin, hair and nails
- asymptomatic screening for Chlamydia and Gonorrhea testing except for prenatal screening

The turn around time for other routine diagnostic testing may also be affected.

We would encourage our frontline clinicians to reduce the use of the following services

Routine Urine cultures

- Do not culture urine in asymptomatic individuals. Asymptomatic bacteriuria should not be treated *except in pregnant women* or prior to an invasive urologic procedure. Most inpatient urine cultures are unnecessary.
- Women with symptoms should be empirically treated with nitrofurantoin. Other options include trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole or fosfomycin and culture reserved for persistent symptoms. See NSH Spectrum App or AMS website for guidance (<https://library.nshealth.ca/ams>)

Skin Swabs

- Avoid swab specimens of superficial ulcers, especially of inadequately debrided wounds

We sincerely apologize for the inconvenience and thank you for your understanding and cooperation. **If there are circumstance that you believe require any of the above specimens to be processed please call the microbiologist on call to discuss.**