

Pathology and Laboratory Medicine Memorandum

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: November 25, 2020

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

Effective immediately, the Microbiology Laboratory at the QEII HSC will enact our business continuity planning due to an unprecedented increase in demand for services related to COVID-19 testing.

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
- Chlamydia and Gonorrhea testing except for prenatal screening

We would encourage our front line 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 you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the laboratory at 902-473-2120