

Ontario Significantly Expanding COVID-19 Testing*Enhanced testing strategy will help stop the spread of the virus*

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TORONTO — To stop the spread of COVID-19, the Ontario government is implementing the next phase of its strategy to significantly expand and enhance testing. In addition to the ongoing testing of the general public at any of the 100 assessment centres now established across the province, Ontario will be proactively testing several priority groups, including:

- Hospital inpatients;
- Residents of long-term care and retirement homes;
- Health care workers, caregivers, care providers, paramedics, and first responders, including police and firefighters;
- Remote, isolated, rural and Indigenous communities;
- Other congregate living centres, including homeless shelters, prisons and group homes;
- Specific vulnerable populations, including patients undergoing chemotherapy or hemodialysis and requiring transplants, as well as pregnant persons, newborns and cross-border workers; and
- Other essential workers, as defined by provincial orders.

"We're laser-focused on ramping up our testing capacity so we can protect the most vulnerable in our communities and those who protect them, like our frontline health care workers and first responders," said Premier Ford. "By expanding our testing capacity, we will be able to find cases faster, intervene earlier, reduce the spread, and save lives."

By implementing this strategy, Ontario expects to double the number of tests processed each day to 8,000 by April 15, 2020 and 14,000 by April 29, 2020, at which point overall lab capacity will have been further expanded.

"By significantly increasing the number of tests each day, we will identify cases early, contain them and prevent putting more people at risk," said Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health. "Doing so is especially important for priority groups like hospital inpatients, long-term care home residents and our brave frontline health care workers and first responders, all of whom are more vulnerable to being exposed to this virus. Nothing is more important than protecting their health and wellbeing."

This testing strategy follows extensive efforts to expand Ontario's lab testing capacity, which helped to quickly eliminate a backlog of approximately 10,000 people within less than two weeks. To date, the province has conducted over 94,000 tests.

The province has re-established same-day testing results, which are now conveniently accessible to patients through a [new user-friendly online portal](#). This portal will help ease pressure on public health units and frontline workers, allowing them to focus their efforts on combating COVID-19. The province is also helping to significantly expand the capacity of public health units to conduct contact tracing and case management, both of which are critical to stopping the spread of the virus, by enabling the use of volunteers, including retired nurses and medical students.

People who have tested negative for COVID-19 must still follow all precautions, including staying at home except to pick up essential supplies like groceries and prescriptions, and keeping at least two-meters apart from others. While an individual may receive a negative test at a given moment in time, the individual is still able to contract and spread the virus.

QUICK FACTS

- Testing guidelines have been provided to health-system partners, including public health units, assessment centres, primary care settings and long-term care homes. Guidelines are forthcoming for specific vulnerable populations and essential workers. The province will also provide guidelines to begin targeted surveillance by sampling populations within northern towns.
- Ontario will continue to increase its testing capacity by leveraging hospital, community and research labs.
- The province is also updating the list of symptoms related to COVID-19, including a hoarse voice, difficulty swallowing, loss of sense of smell or taste, diarrhea or nausea/vomiting. For seniors, there are additional symptoms including chills, delirium with no other obvious reason, falls, acute functional decline, increased heart rate and decreased blood pressure. These updated symptoms are in addition to difficulty breathing, fever, cough, muscle aches, fatigue, headache, sore throat and runny nose.
- All Ontarians should stay home unless for essential reasons only, such as such as accessing health care services, shopping for groceries, picking up medication, walking pets when required, or supporting vulnerable community members with meeting essential needs. If you must leave your home, stay at least two meters apart from others.

LEARN MORE

- [Updated COVID-19 Provincial Testing Guidance](#)
- [Quick Reference on Public Health Guidance on Testing and Clearance](#)
- [Updated Directive for Long-Term Care Homes](#)
- [Ontario's enhanced testing strategy](#)
- Visit Ontario's [website](#) to learn more about how the province continues to protect Ontarians from COVID-19.
- [Ontario's Self-Assessment Tool](#)
- [Ontario's Action Plan: Responding to COVID-19](#)

Hayley Chazan Minister Elliott's Office

Hayley.Chazan@ontario.ca

David Jensen Communications Branch

media.moh@ontario.ca

416 314-6197